NINTENDO POWER®

RPG Special • Phantasy Star 0 • Arc Rise Fantasia • Dragon Quest V • Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon • Sands of Destruction

238

FEBRUARY 2009

SUBSCRIBER EDITION

LEGO
BATMAN
THE VIDEOGAME
Wii
EVERYONE 10+
ESRB

Wii
TOUCH GENERATIONS
Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection
Wii Music
Nintendo
EVERYONE
ESRB
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB

VIDEO GAME RENTALS DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

6,000+ Titles — PICK YOUR GAMES ONLINE

First Class Mail — WE RUSH THEM STRAIGHT TO YOU

NO Late Fees — PLAY GAMES AS LONG AS YOU WANT

Free Shipping — RETURN GAMES AND GET MORE FROM YOUR LIST

START NOW FOR JUST $8.95

www.gamefly.com

© 2008 GameFly, Inc. GAMEFLY and the GF Logo are trademarks of GameFly, Inc. All other marks used under license by their respective owners. Unless you cancel your account, your credit card will be charged for the price of your game plan at the end of your free trial. You must be 18 years of age or older and reside inside the 50 United States to use the GameFly service.

PLAYSTATION 3 PlayStation 2 PSP PlayStation Portable XBOX 360

GF GAMEFLY
Pokémon Ranger Shadows of Almia
Nintendo DS
Welcome to Animal Crossing City Folk
Wii
Nintendo
Star Wars The Clone Wars Lightsaber Duels
LucasArts
OPEN HERE
PO BOX 60018
CITY OF INDUSTRY, CA 91716-0018
FIRST-CLASS MAIL FLAT
PROCESS ON AFSM 100
XBOX
Wii
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
NINTENDO DS
GAME BOY ADVANCE

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2009

FEATURES

A New Frontier 34
Sega's multiplayer action-RPG series returns with Phantasy Star 0, exclusively for Nintendo DS!

Life after Death 44
If you enjoy stories with dark themes, then your DS needs Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume.

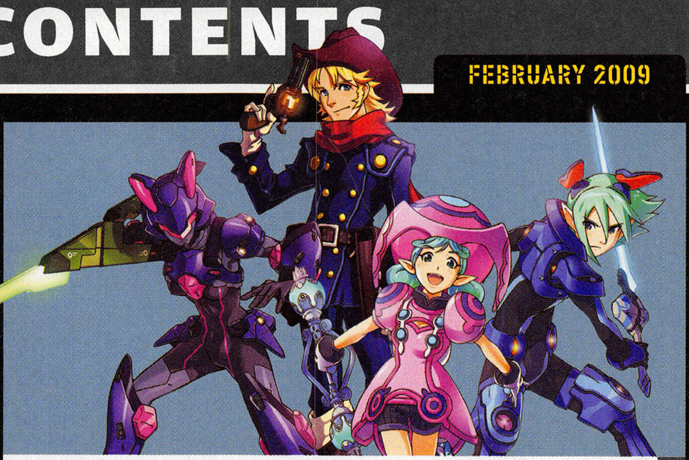
Destruction Is at Hand 50
The world is under attack—by you—in Sands of Destruction, one of the most intriguing RPGs coming to DS.

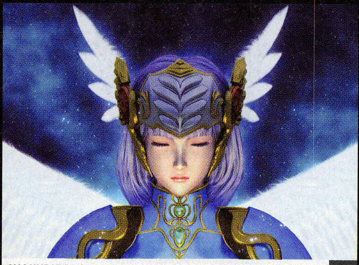
Days of Slimes and Roses 56
Find out why the DS remake of Dragon Quest V holds up as one of the most captivating RPGs ever.

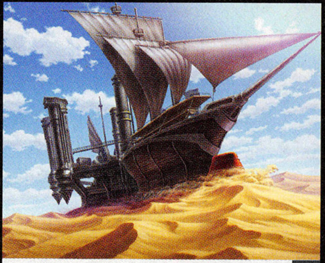
The Light Fantastic 62
Wii gets its first totally original RPG with Arc Rise Fantasia, and it's looking good!

Marth's Moment 68
See how that cool sword-swinging guy from Smash Bros. got his start in Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon for DS.

Two of a Kind 76
The adventure in Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time is so big, it spans both Wii and DS!


PHANTASY STAR 0 34

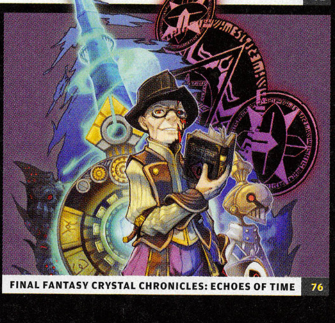

VALKYRIE PROFILE: COVENANT OF THE PLUME 44


SANDS OF DESTRUCTION 50

DRAGON QUEST V 56

ARC RISE FANTASIA 62

FIRE EMBLEM: SHADOW DRAGON 68


FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: ECHOES OF TIME 76

SimAnimals™
THIS GAME HAS BEEN
ANIMAL
TESTED

© 2009 Electronic Arts Inc. The EA logo, the MySims logo and SimAnimals are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved. Wii and DS are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Comic Mischief

Wii
SimAnimals
NINTENDO DS
SimAnimals
E
EA

NINTENDO DS

Wii

RUN THE WILD!
In SimAnimals™ you can touch, move and play with a forest full of wild animals. Take control and show nature how it's done! Available February 2009.

www.SimAnimals.com

EA

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2009

DEPARTMENTS

Pulse 6

News 10

Wii Channels 18

Previews 22

- Avalon Code 32
- Dead Rising 33
- The House of the Dead: Overkill 24
- Little Magician's Magic Adventure 26
- Lux-Pain 25
- Mario & Luigi RPG 3 27
- Puzzle Quest: Galactrix 28
- Sonic and the Black Knight 23
- Suikoden: Tierkreis 22
- Touch Mechanic 26
- Zubo 30
- We Ski & Snowboard 28

Power Profiles 80

Playback 84

Sweepstakes 86

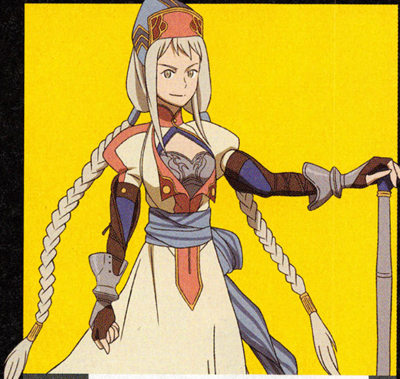
Reviews 87

- The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity 89
- Fishing Master: World Tour 90
- Legacy of Ys: Books I & II 90
- The Lord of the Rings: Conquest 89
- NASCAR Kart Racing 90
- Tenchu: Shadow Assassins 88

Community 94

Next Month 96

NEWS KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS 11



PREVIEW SUIKODEN: TIERKREIS 22

POWER PROFILES NOBUO UEMATSU 80

REVIEW TENCHU: SHADOW ASSASSINS 88

GAME INDEX

Another Code: R-Door of Memory (Wii)	14
Arc Rise Fantasia (Wii)	62
Avalon Code (DS)	32
Big Kahuna Party (WW)	20
Bit.Trip: Beat (WW)	20
Boingz (WW)	20
Boogerman (VC)	21
Breath of Fire II (VC)	19
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars –Director's Cut (Wii, DS)	13
Bruiser & Scratch (WW)	20
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity (DS)	89
The Dark Spire (DS)	14
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop (Wii)	33
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)	56
Dragon Quest X (Wii)	14
Dragon Warrior (NES)	84
Enduro Racer (VC)	21
Evasive Space (WW)	20
Fishing Master: World Tour (Wii)	90
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time (Wii, DS)	76
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon (DS)	68
Guitar Hero Modern Hits (DS)	10
Hockey Allstar Shootout (WW)	20
The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)	24
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)	11
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II (DS)	90
Little Magician's Magic Adventure (DS)	26
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest (DS)	89
Lux-Pain (DS)	25
Mario & Luigi RPG 3 (DS)	27
Mega Man Star Force 3 (DS)	12
Metal Slug 2 (VC)	21
NASCAR Kart Racing (Wii)	90
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis (Wii)	16
New Play Control! Pikmin (Wii)	16
Paper Mario (VC)	18
Phantasy Star II (VC)	19
Phantasy Star Ø (DS)	34
Pit Crew Panic! (WW)	21
Pokémon Platinum (DS)	16
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix (DS)	28
Sam & Max Season Two (Wii)	11
Sands of Destruction (DS)	50
Secret of Mana (VC)	19
Shining Force (VC)	19
Shining Force II (VC)	19
Sonic and the Black Knight (Wii)	23
Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (VC)	21
Space Invaders Get Even (WW)	20
Steal Princess (DS)	13
Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People Episode 5: 8-Bit Is Enough (WW)	21
Sudoku Challenge! (WW)	21
Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)	22
Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (VC)	18
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins (Wii)	88
Touch Mechanic (DS)	26
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume (DS)	44
We Ski & Snowboard (Wii)	28
Ys Book I & II (VC)	18
Zubo (DS)	30

DS = NINTENDO DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

NEWS 🟥
CHANNELS 🟦
PREVIEW ⬛
FEATURE ▨
PLAYBACK 🟧
REVIEW 🟦

THE RACE IS ON!
the Chase
Felix meets Felicity
The race is on! Let's do this...
ATARI
NINTENDO DS
RAZORBACK DEVELOPMENTS

DEFTLY NAVIGATE OVER 40 CHALLENGING LEVELS.

CREATE RUSH LINES TO AVOID OBSTACLES.

KNOCK ENEMIES OUT WITH THE SUPER FAST GRIND.

atari.com/thechase

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Alcohol Reference
Comic Mischief

The Chase © 2009 Atari Europe SASU. All Rights Reserved. Developed by Razorback Developments Ltd. Razorback and the Razorback logo are trademarks of Razorback Developments Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Marketed and distributed by Atari, Inc., New York, NY. Atari and the Atari logo are trademarks owned by Atari Interactive, Inc. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

Pulse

The Year of the RPG

Chris Slate

Every RPG fan treasures the game that hooked them on stat management and epic adventure; mine was Dragon Warrior, the NES classic that defined console RPGs. In the 20 years since that game's release, the genre has grown dramatically to offer hundred-hour adventures and cinematic storytelling. We're sure to see RPGs evolve even more in 2009 with a tidal wave of new releases on the way, especially for Nintendo DS. The handheld has such a large and rapidly growing RPG catalog that it seems on pace to outshine even the genre's Super NES glory days.

To celebrate the long and varied list of upcoming role-playing epics, every feature this month spotlights a big new RPG. If you're not a role-player, don't worry—the issue is also jam-packed with amazing games of all types. But I encourage everyone to give each RPG a look—one of them could very well be the title that makes you a lifelong fan!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Wii
KLONOA The PLATFORMING MASTERPIECE RETURNS!
NINTENDO POWER
DRAGON QUEST V
MADWORLD
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL
SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT
THE CONDUIT
ROCKSTAR TELLS ALL!
GTA
CHINATOWN WARS
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW & SCREENS
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
SHELL-SHOCKER!
UBISOFT ASSEMBLES AN ALL-STAR TEAM TO CRAFT TMNT, Wii'S NEXT BIG 4-WAY BRAWLER!
Future

V237 JANUARY 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters between slaying slimes and crashing airships. But first, this month's special letter request: what quality is most important to you in a good RPG? Send your responses to the address on page 8; and we'll print the best ones!

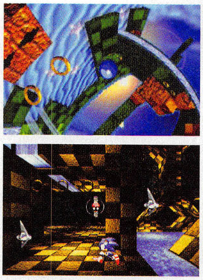
LETTERS

GREAT MASCOTS THINK ALIKE

When I was a little kid I used to watch my dad play the Sega Genesis, which led me to become a big Sonic fan. As a result, when I heard that Sega once planned a game called Sonic X-Treme for the Sega Saturn, it caught my eye and I did some research. I watched some videos of an early version of the game, and the more I saw, the more it felt like I was looking at Super Mario Galaxy! I think that Nintendo may have been inspired by this unreleased game!

—WALLID K.

Y'know, back in the day I wrote a cover story on Sonic X-Treme for an old magazine called Game Players, but I didn't make the Super Mario Galaxy connection until reading your letter. I'm sure the similarities are just a coincidence, but still, nice find!



As Wallid points out, Sonic almost went on his own Mario Galaxy-ish adventure.

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

Have you guys ever reviewed a game that was so awful that it rated a 1.0 out of 10? The worst score I've ever seen was for Baroque, which earned a 3.0. Do games get any worse than that?

—(NO NAME GIVEN)

Well, we gave a 2.5 to Tamagotchi: Party On! (Wii), and a 2.0 to Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer (DS). We certainly don't enjoy handing out low scores, but we've got to let the people know!

INDESTRUCTIBLE

For some strange reason, all my Nintendo systems are indestructible. For example, my N64 got flung off a table onto a marble floor and still worked perfectly. My Nintendo DS was left outside all night and fell victim to morning dew, but the microphone and everything were totally fine! My sister magically made the screen lose one of its hinges, and I accidentally dropped it onto asphalt, but it still works. I'm not sure if Nintendo designed these systems to be immortal, but they did a pretty darn good job!

—(NO NAME GIVEN)

So you're the reason that Nintendo puts those illustrated warnings in system manuals, like "Do not throw your console down the stairs" and "Do not submerge your handheld underwater." Geez, are you trying to destroy your hardware? Be careful!

I haven't been into the Turtles since I was a kid, but I have to say that the Wii TMNT fighting game looks incredible. If the multiplayer is even half as good as Super Smash Bros. Brawl, I might just have to break out my Ninja Turtles Underoos. **—DEAN T.**

Er, you might want to tell your friends the dress code before they come over to play, Dean. But I agree that four-player ninjarific battles—played while fully clothed, mind you—could be just the thing to put the former NES and Super NES champs back on top of the gaming world.

PREVIEW 2009
2009 PREVIEW
SHELL-SHOCKER!
28
29

THE PLAN IS WORKING

When my math teacher saw me reading Nintendo Power in class, he said that he used to read Nintendo Power, too! A couple of days later, he commented that only Chuck Norris can divide by zero! This goes to show that math teachers can be cool, too.

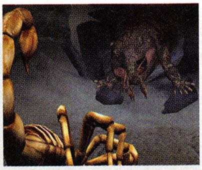
—(NO NAME GIVEN)

Ah, I see that Nintendo Power's 20-year plan to brainwash generations of readers has finally taken effect! Next, be on the lookout for a massive surge in Zelda tattoos and a nationwide rush to bake Nintendo-themed cakes.

CUTE BUT TOUGH

My friends think that Animal Crossing games aren't manly! *Pffft!* What's their problem? Please tell me that Animal Crossing is a very manly game! **—S.O.Z**

Are your friends kidding? With endless axe-swinging, tree-chopping action, playing Animal Crossing is like living the life of a burly lumberjack!



If it's animals you want, S.O.Z, then keep an eye out for Deadly Creatures.

MORE CLAWS, PLEASE

Do you know of any new animal games coming to Wii? I am an Okami freak and I love Twilight Princess, but those are the only games I know of that focus on animals. If you could tell me about any others, I would really appreciate it. The video game world has been tainted by unnecessary and mindless war and gun games!

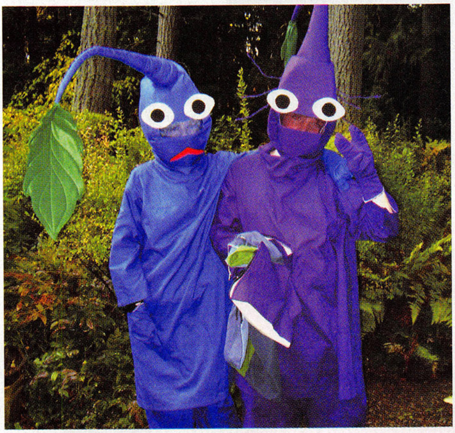
—OKAMIFREAK

Now, now—shooting games have their fans, too. Assuming that you've already considered the long list of Wii and DS kid-friendly pet games like Zoo Hospital, Wildlife Vet, and Crocodile Dental Academy (OK, I made that last one up), I think your best bet is Deadly Creatures, which releases for Wii in February. The game is more creepy-crawly than cuddly, and lets you fight snakes and other beasts while playing as a scorpion and a spider.

DRESSED FOR (HALLOWEEN) SUCCESS

My grandmother made these Pikmin costumes for my friend and I to wear last Halloween, and I thought I'd show them to you. I'm the blue Pikmin and my friend is the purple one. **—CLONE 224**

Nice! But I can't imagine that trick-or-treating out in the woods scored you a lot of candy.



Clone 224—presumably shown here with Clone 225—didn't need bossy ol' Captain Olimar's help to get the goods on Halloween.

NINTENDO POWER CAN'T BE CONTAINED

You know you have too many back issues of Nintendo Power when your collection collapses under its own weight.

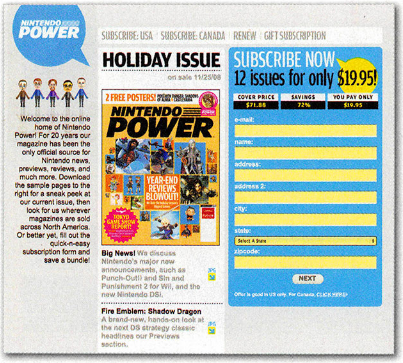
Apparently, my bookcase was not designed to hold a complete collection of Nintendo Power magazines plus all four issues of Nintendo Power Advance, 26 Nintendo Power strategy guides, and various merchandise catalogs, bonus issues, comics, and other extras from the past 20 years. I learned this fact the hard way when the adjustable shelf in said bookcase collapsed upon receiving Volume 234.

My precious collection somehow escaped unscathed, and I managed to return order to chaos by moving each issue of Nintendo Power to the very bottom of the cabinet, relocating the strategy guides elsewhere, and installing a replacement shelf for the remaining items.

Funny enough, the bottom shelf will be out of room when I put away the latest issue (Vol. 235), so I'll have to start relying on the adjustable shelf again. May I respectfully request that you consider releasing all future issues of Nintendo Power on microfiche?

—GORD R.

Strangely, I can't think of a more fitting tribute to Nintendo Power's 20-year anniversary—if we've outgrown the shelf, we must be getting somewhere. Watch out, file cabinets—you're next!



NINTENDO POWER
SUBSCRIBE: USA | SUBSCRIBE: CANADA | RENEW | GIFT SUBSCRIPTION
2 FREE POSTERS!
NINTENDO POWER
YEAR-END REVIEWS BLOWOUT!
TOKYO GAME SHOW REPORT!
JPG
JPG
NEXT

HOLIDAY ISSUE

on sale 11/25/08

Welcome to the online home of Nintendo Power! For 20 years our magazine has been the only official source for Nintendo news, previews, reviews, and much more. Download the sample pages to the right for a sneak peek at our current issue, then look for us wherever magazines are sold across North America. Or better yet, fill out the quick-n-easy subscription form and save a bundle!

Big News! We discuss Nintendo's major new announcements, such as Punch-Out!! and Sin and Punishment 2 for Wii, and the new Nintendo DSi.

Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon A brand-new, hands-on look at the next DS strategy classic headlines our Previews section.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

12 issues for only $19.95!

COVER PRICE	SAVINGS	YOU PAY ONLY
$71.88	72%	$19.95

e-mail:

name:

address:

address 2:

city:

state: Select A State

zipcode:

Offer is good in US only. For Canada, CLICK HERE!

I just checked out you guys' new-and-improved website. It's awesome! I really like the fact that I can look at new Nintendo Power pages on the computer. Keep up the good work!

—(NO NAME GIVEN)

Oh, you mean www.nintendopower.com? Thanks for plugging the new site so we don't have to!

LEAVE 'EM ALONE!

I am disgusted when a video game is re-released and the script is rewritten, as was the case with Final Fantasy VI Advance and Chrono Trigger for DS. The characters' mannerisms and ways of speaking were what hooked me in the first place, and it saddens me that those titles have been slathered with wordy, redundant text, like most games being made these days. Books aren't rewritten when they are republished, so why should games be? **—JOHN S.**

I'm responding to N64 Lover from Vol. 236, who said that Star Fox 64 should return as a Virtual Console game with updated graphics. I don't think that would be right. The graphics are what bring about some of the nostalgia that we seek when we play old games. Look at Ocarina of Time on Virtual Console—it uses the same old N64 graphics and is doing quite well. Why ruin something like that?

—OLD SCHOOLER

I'm tempted to agree with both of you, but while I like turning on the original Super Mario Bros. from time to time, I also enjoy the spruced-up Mario All-Stars version of the game. There's something to be said for nostalgia, but it's hard to knock someone for making improvements. And I'd imagine that most players who never tried the game back in the day would gladly go for the better-looking, more polished version. To each his own.

ISLAND GAMES

If you were stuck on a deserted island with an unlimited supply of food, water, and (somehow) electricity, and could choose one Nintendo handheld and one home console with a game for each, what would you pick? **—MATTHEW P.**

Assuming that I don't magically have Wi-Fi—or a Wii loaded with Virtual Console and WiiWare titles—I suppose I'd spend my days becoming a god at Super Mario World on the Super NES. For my handheld I'd go with a Nintendo DS, because nothing makes the hours fly by like Tetris DS.

MARIO 6
20
TIME 248
26
13910

Being stuck on an island with Super Mario World and Tetris DS doesn't sound bad at all, Matthew!

SOUND ADVICE

I read Justin's letter in Vol. 236 about how he liked playing Baldur's Gate with his wife, and I have two similar Wii titles to recommend: Marvel Ultimate Alliance and Alien Syndrome. Those co-op action-RPGs should fit the bill. **—DURMGRID**

You're right, Durmgrid—those games are exactly the type that Justin was looking for. Thanks for taking the time to help out!

SCORE
13335
HIGH SCORE
0
HOLD
NEXT
LINE
30
LV
4

PLEASE WRITE US

pulse@nintendopower.com

Or via carrier pigeon at

Nintendo Power/Pulse
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd.
STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR LETTER PUBLISHED:

Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

PERSONS OF LORDLY CALIBER

EDITOR IN CHIEF **Chris Slate**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Steve Thomason**
SENIOR EDITOR **Chris Hoffman**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR **Justin Cheng**
ART DIRECTOR **Chris Imlay**
CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER **Rebekah Lane**
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS **Andrew Hayward, Casey Loe, Chris Shepperd, George Sinfield, David F. Smith, Phil Theobald**
COPY EDITOR **Candace Cunningham**
LICENSING MANAGER **Frances Wall Jha**
EDITOR-AT-LARGE **Scott Pelland**

BUSINESS
PUBLISHER **Kelley Corten, 650-745-9225, kcorten@futureus.com**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **David Cooper 646-723-5447, dcooper@futureus.com**
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR - GAMES GROUP **Nate Hunt, 562-983-8004, nhunt@futureus.com**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR (Bay Area) **Christina Perez, 206-417-3315, cperez@futureus.com**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR (Southwest) **Isaac Uguy, 949-218-0981, luguy@futureus.com**
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Benjamin Alessio 650-238-2324, balessio@futureus.com**
DIRECTOR, CORPORATE SALES & MARKETING **Jim Schiekofer, 646-723-5410, jschiekofer@futureus.com**
CORP. SALES MIDWEST MANAGER **Jodi Sosna 212-217-1358, jsosna@futureus.com**
CORP. SALES WEST MANAGER **Nadine Weiss 323-493-5929, nweiss@futureus.com**
AD PROJECT MANAGER **Rhoda Ushijima 650-238-2474, rushijima@futureus.com**
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR **Arthur St. Germain, 650-238-2571, astgermain@futureus.com**
MARKETING MANAGER **Andrea Recio-Ang, arecio-ang@futureus.com**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR **Larry Briseno**
PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR **Jennifer Lim**

CIRCULATION
GROUP CIRCULATION DIRECTOR **Peter Kelly**
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR **Bill Shewey**
ONLINE CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER **Betsy Wong**
BILLING & RENEWAL MANAGER **Mike Hill**
FULFILLMENT MANAGER **Angi Martinez**
DIRECT MARKETING SPECIALIST **Alexandra Davydova**
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER **Mike Manrique**
NEWSSTAND COORDINATOR **Alex Guzman**

FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court,
Ste 400, South San
Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus-inc.com

PRESIDENT **Jonathan Simpson-Bint**
VICE PRESIDENT/CFO **John Sutton**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/PUBLISHING DIRECTOR **Simon Whitcombe**
VICE PRESIDENT/PUBLISHING DIRECTOR **Stacey Levy**
VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNET DEVELOPMENT **Tyson Daugherty**
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR/BUS. DEV. **Dave Barrow**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/GAMES GROUP **Stephen Pierce**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/MUSIC **Brad Tolinski**
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES **Nancy Durlester**
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Richie Lesovoy**

FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.futureplc.com
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc.com

NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Stevie Spring
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR: John Bowman

Nintendo Power Customer Care
P.O. Box 5770
Harlan, IA 51593-1270
1-866-941-8368
For Subscription Problems Only!
nintendopower@cdsfulfillment.com.
http://service.futureus-inc.com/
REPRINTS: For reprints, contact Reprint Management Services, 717.399.1900 ext. 100

Game trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners. TM, ®, the Nintendo DS logo and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2009 Nintendo.

ISSN: 1041-9551

GO FULL FORCE!

Explore a thrilling new storyline in the Alien Force world!

Cultivator

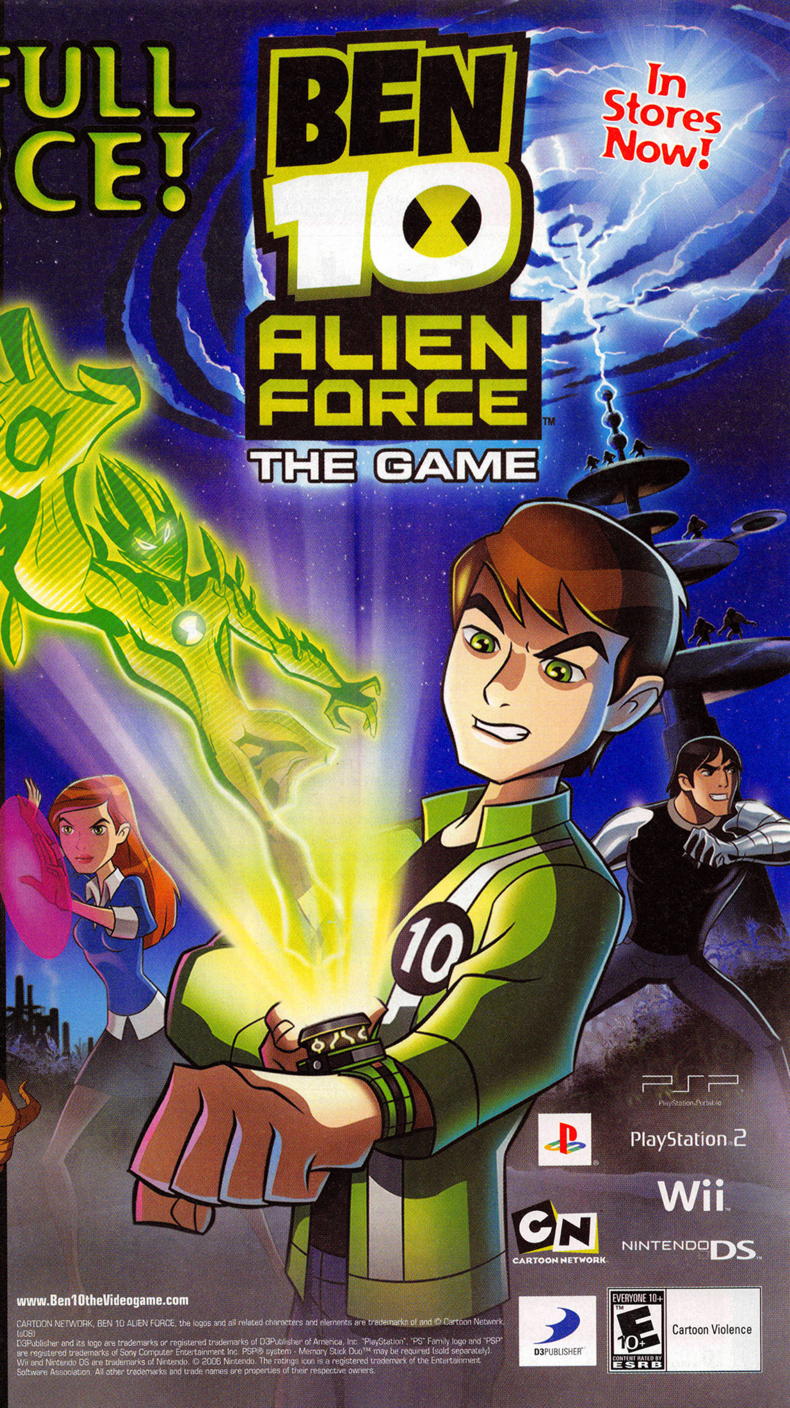
Team up with a friend in 2 player co-op mode!*

GO
Cold Kicked

Take control of Ben as he changes into Humungousaur, Swampfire & other aliens!

EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE ALIENS!
Play as Swampfire and Humungousaur on all systems PLUS Big Chill, Jet Ray and Spidermonkey on the Wii, PlayStation®2 system, and PSP® system, OR Echo Echo, Goop and ChromaStone on the Nintendo DS!

*Co-op play exclusive to PlayStation®2 and Wii versions. PlayStation®2 system and Wii screenshots shown.



BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE™
THE GAME

In Stores Now!

www.Ben10theVideogame.com

PSP
PlayStation Portable
PlayStation 2
Wii
NINTENDO DS
CARTOON NETWORK
D3PUBLISHER

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Cartoon Violence

CARTOON NETWORK, BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE, the logos and all related characters and elements are trademarks of and © Cartoon Network. (s08)
D3Publisher and its logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of D3Publisher of America, Inc. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. PSP® system - Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). Wii and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are properties of their respective owners.

FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

ANOTHER ANOTHER CODE

ミーナは
ホイミを となえた！

THAR BE DRAGONS HERE

Hero of Today

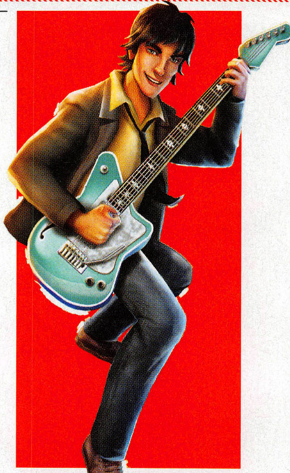
Forget classic rock—Activision's ultrapopular rhythm franchise gets contemporary in Guitar Hero Modern Hits for DS.

After two successful DS games, publisher Activision and developer Vicarious Visions are trying some new things with their latest portable Guitar Hero. They've dropped the awkward On Tour nomenclature, for example, which is a great improvement by itself. And there have been some changes under the hood, which should make Modern Hits the most robust portable Guitar Hero yet.

Aside from the new, current soundtrack—featuring 28 popular songs that have been released within the past five years—Modern Hits features an entirely new single-player game. You're no longer simply going down a list, playing and unlocking songs until you reach the end. Modern Hits is more open-ended: as you play, you'll become more famous and gain more money (to unlock outfits and guitars), fans (to unlock songs and venues), and Fan Requests as a result. These requests vary—for example, you might have to play bass, avoid explosive Bomb Notes, or play the song at twice the normal speed (aka Hyperspeed). Each song has three challenges to complete, and they can be completed in any order. If you find a particular fan challenge too difficult or are just tired of playing the song in general, you can skip it and try something else—a song from the opening act at a new venue or the headline act at your current venue, for instance. With each act comprising three songs, you have a good amount of choices.

Of course, if you just want to play for the sake of playing, there's always the Quick Play option, where all the songs are unlocked. You can also share songs wirelessly with the two previous DS games, further expanding the track list.

—JUSTIN C.



Indie rocker Simon Grimmsy is one of two new characters exclusive to Modern Hits.

Track Facts

Here are two of the venues and 12 of the songs that have been revealed so far.

RUSTY ROCCO'S

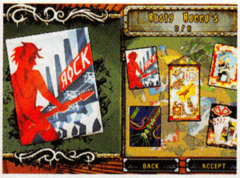
OPENING ACT:
"Dimension" by Wolfmother
"Violet Hill" by Coldplay
"Where Are We Runnin'" by Lenny Kravitz

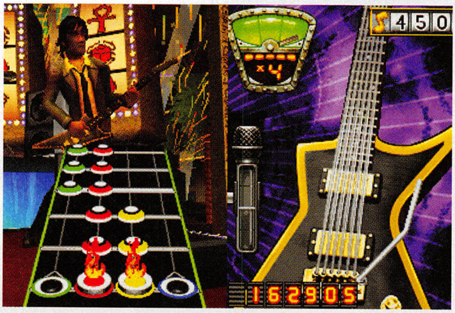
HEADLINE ACT:
"Sweet Sacrifice" by Evanescence
"Reptilia" by The Strokes
"Unconditional" by The Bravery

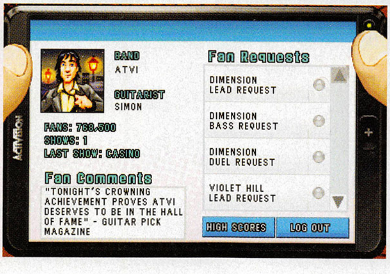
CASINO VICARIOUS

OPENING ACT:
"This Ain't a Scene, It's an Arms Race" by Fall Out Boy
"Everybody Get Dangerous" by Weezer
"Ruby" by The Kaiser Chiefs

HEADLINE ACT:
"Adrenaline" by 12 Stones
"The Metal" by Tenacious D
"Falling Down" by Atreyu







BAND
ATVI

GUITARIST
SIMON

FANS: 768,500
SHOWS: 1
LAST SHOW: CASINO

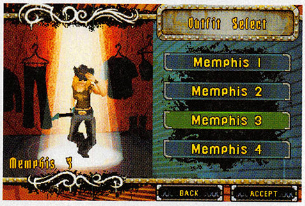
Fan Comments

"TONIGHT'S CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT PROVES ATVI DESERVES TO BE IN THE HALL OF FAME" - GUITAR PICK MAGAZINE

Fan Requests

DIMENSION LEAD REQUEST
DIMENSION BASS REQUEST
DIMENSION DUEL REQUEST
VIOLET HILL LEAD REQUEST

[Left] If you want to make it big, you'll have to accept your fans' requests.



NEWS FROM JAPAN

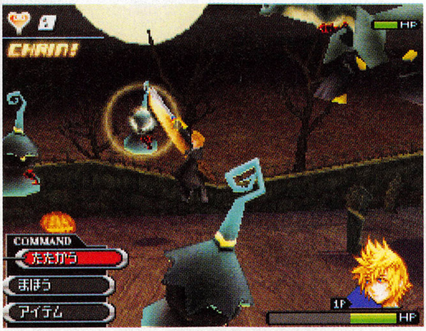
Tales of Mystery

Japanese gamers who preordered Namco Bandai's Tales of Hearts for the DS got a special treat on their bonus DVD: a 45-second preview video of the new Tales game in development for Wii. Although no title was shown, the background music and other small clues have led some to believe that the game is Tales of Destiny 3. (The original Tales of Destiny was released on the PlayStation in the US, but its sequel was never localized.) Further details are expected at Japan's upcoming Jump Festa game show. In the meantime, those hoping for a US release should send Namco Bandai a message by buying Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World by the truckload. **—CASEY L.**

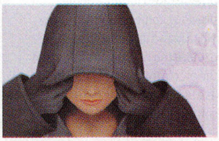
Square Enix Hearts DS

It's official! Square Enix announces **Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days** for North America.

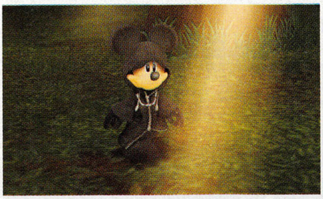
Fans of Disney-crossover series Kingdom Hearts can finally rest easy: publisher Square Enix has confirmed that the DS installment of their hit action-RPG franchise will be coming to North America in mid-2009. Developed by h.a.n.d. (maker of Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon) and titled Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days, the saga's latest chapter takes place following the events of 2004 Game Boy Advance game Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories and stars Roxas (essentially a clone of series protagonist Sora) and his cohorts in the mysterious Organization XIII. Despite the change in heroes, the gameplay remains essentially the same as in the mainline Kingdom Hearts titles; you'll still travel to worlds based on various Disney movies (such as *Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Hercules,* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*) and use physical attacks and magic spells to fight the evil Heartless in real-time combat. For the first time in the series, you'll also be able to team up with friends in a four-player co-op mode that lets you each control a different member of Organization XIII. Additionally, you can expect extravagant cut-scenes, quality voice work, and a plot that reveals what happened between Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II. **—CHRIS H.**

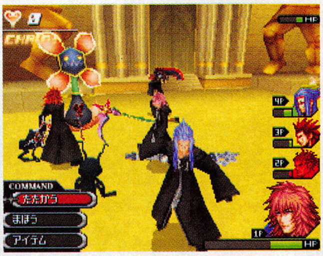


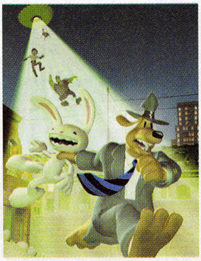
[Above] Since Sora's fast asleep following Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories, Roxas takes center stage.



Is the mysterious 14th member of Organization XIII under that hood?







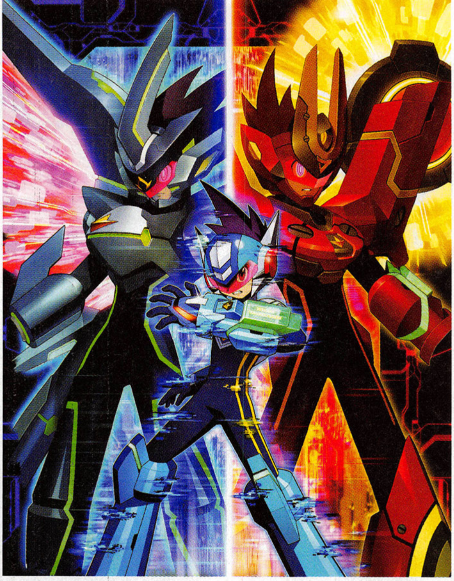
Stupid Pet Tricks

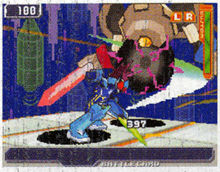
Dog and rabbity-thing **Sam & Max** reteam for a second collection of Wii point-and-click adventures from Telltale Games and Atari.

Long before Strong Bad had a stranglehold on episodic point-and-click adventures, freelance police Sam & Max claimed the comedic beat with wry commentary and manic energy. Sam & Max Season Two encapsulates the five episodes of the team's second PC series in a single disc that involves adventures to the North Pole and the tropics, along with a short stint in Hell. As you point at the screen, dog Sam answers your commands by searching his surroundings, talking to persons of interest, and generally unraveling mysteries. Max offers insights and comic relief. The interface is simple enough for players of any skill level to dive in right away, and an optional tutorial introduces you to the intricacies of the gameplay. If you're stuck at any time, a player-adjustable hint system, which monitors the amount of time that's passed since you last solved a puzzle, points you in the right direction. **—GEORGE S.**

Mega Man Brings the Noise

Mega Man is back with new forms, new perils, and a more-mature look in **Mega Man Star Force 3** for DS.





[Right] Mega Man stands strong in front of his two new ultimate forms: Black Ace and Red Joker. Note the aged-up mech-style character designs.

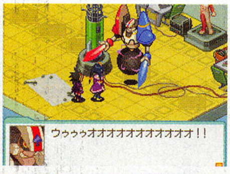
There's no rest for young Geo Stelar and his alien companion Omega-Xis. The pair—who join forces to form Mega Man in his most recent incarnation—have already defeated the forces of evil on two occasions, but they'll be facing their biggest challenges yet this August with the North American release of Mega Man Star Force 3: Black Ace and Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker.

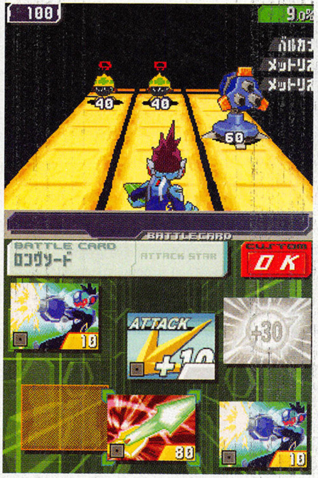
Following the same action-oriented RPG formula of the previous games in the series, Mega Man Star Force 3 lets you explore the real world as Geo and the electromagnetic-wave world as Mega Man, gathering info, conversing with NPCs, and solving puzzles as you go. You'll also get into random battles that play out in real time on a three-by-five grid, in which you'll use randomly chosen battle cards from your deck to blast foes with a variety of weapons.

This time, however, the stakes are higher, and—as per the Mega Man norm—there are new twists on the familiar premise. A meteor (dubbed Meteor G) is hurtling toward Earth, and in addition to the threat of collision, Mega Man must deal with the "noise" that's being caused by recent technological advancements. However, the effects of noise aren't all bad; you can actually harness its power to cause random beneficial transformations to Mega Man. There are more than 100 Mega Man forms in all, including two ultimate forms: the Black Ace and the Red Joker, each of which is exclusive to the corresponding version of the game. Each game version has other exclusive transformations, as well.

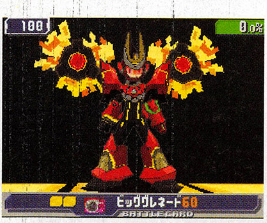
In addition to the Noise Change system, Star Force 3 features several new story and gameplay elements, such as interactive avatars called Wizards and the ability to stack and scatter battle cards in combat (which adds an extra layer of strategy). You can also expect a slightly more mature story and a similarly aged-up visual presentation that's influenced by traditional Japanese mech designs. Mega Man Star Force fans should look forward to the series' deepest, most promising installment yet.

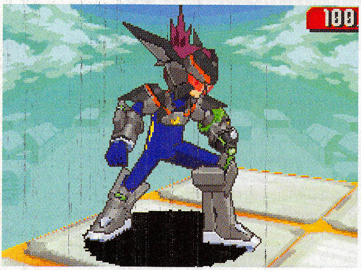
—CHRIS H.

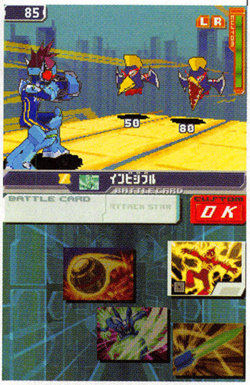




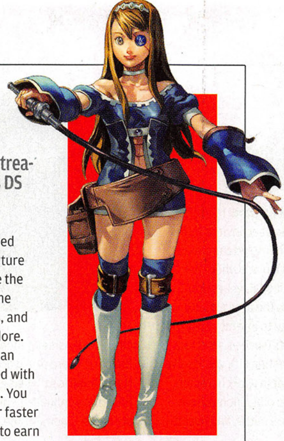
The effects of "noise" let Mega Man take on many new and powerful transformations.





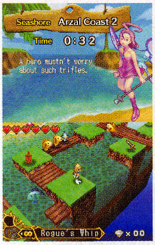


Regal Raider

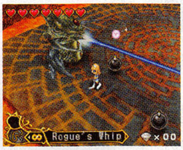


A wayward heroine with a taste for taking treasure finds diamonds and demons in Atlus's DS puzzle-adventure **Steal Princess**.

Developed by Climax Entertainment and released in Japan last year by Marvelous, Steal Princess is set for a North American rollout in March courtesy of Atlus. The game mixes isometric-view platforming with an emphasis on puzzle-solving. As thief Anise explores the palace of the Ancient Demon King in search of booty, keys, and a kidnapped prince (a nice departure from the tired "save the princess" theme), she runs, jumps, swings, and attacks enemies galore. The game's more than 150 levels are loaded with traps and treasures. You can replay levels for faster times and a chance to earn more gems, a higher rank, and a better ending. You can also create your own levels, placing enemies and items and setting your own victory conditions. Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection compatibility lets you interface with other Steal Princess players and trade customized levels. A combination of gameplay styles makes the game a real steal for adventurers of all stripes. **—GEORGE S.**



A hero mustn't worry about such trifles.

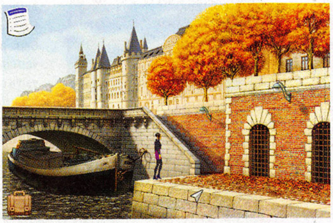


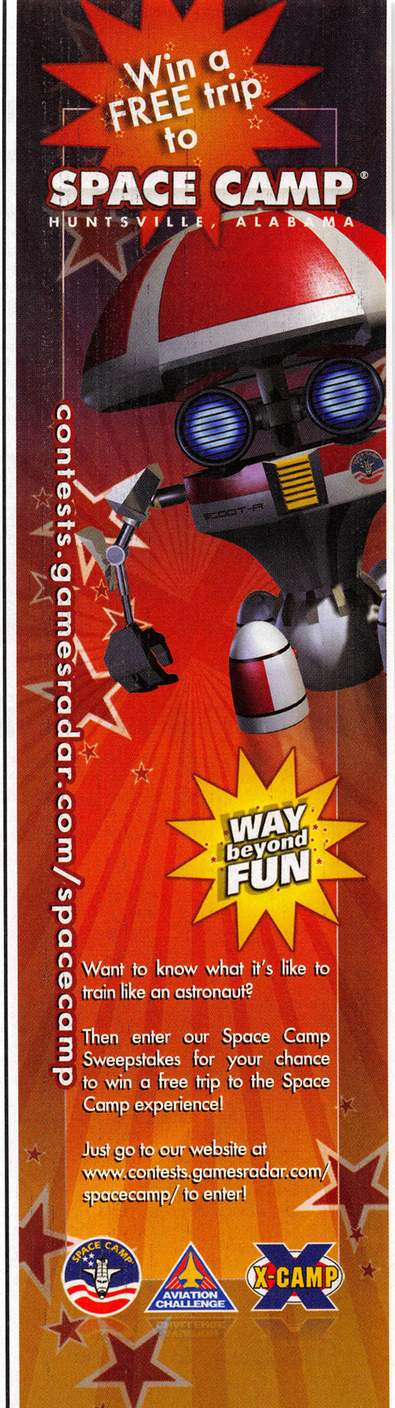
Adventure Reforged

A classic point-and-click caper is given new life with **Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars–The Director's Cut**.

In March Ubisoft and Revolution Software will resurrect popular PC adventure Broken Sword with an all-new Director's Cut version for Wii and DS. The game will feature additional puzzles designed to take advantage of the respective platforms, as well as an expanded storyline that helps tie it to later games in the series. It will also receive a significant visual makeover, including artwork by Dave Gibbons, the illustrator for the *Watchmen* graphic novel.

"These new platforms and their innovative controls enabled us to translate and enrich the point-and-click gaming experience in a way that no other console allowed before," says Revolution founder and designer of the Broken Sword series, Charles Cecil. "Through Dave's animated faces, the game's characters are portrayed as empathetic and emotional—driving the narrative in a way that has never been done before in an adventure game. The Director's Cut has allowed me to deliver my true vision for the series." **—STEVE T.**





Win a FREE trip to SPACE CAMP®
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

contests.gamesradar.com/spacecamp

WAY beyond FUN

Want to know what it's like to train like an astronaut?

Then enter our Space Camp Sweepstakes for your chance to win a free trip to the Space Camp experience!

Just go to our website at www.contests.gamesradar.com/spacecamp/ to enter!

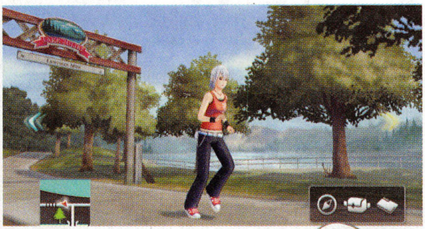
SPACE CAMP
AVIATION CHALLENGE
X-CAMP

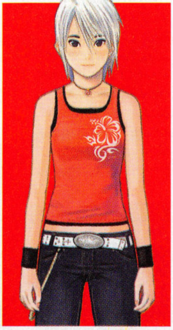
NEWS FROM JAPAN

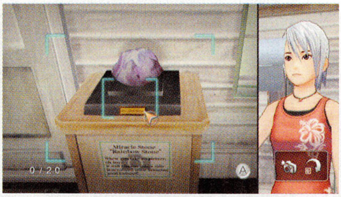
Yes, There Is Another

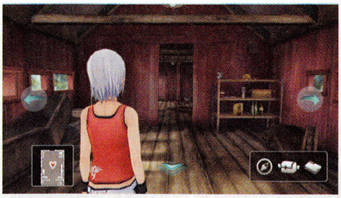
New details emerge about **Another Code: R**, the Japanese Wii sequel to Trace Memory.

Back in October Nintendo announced that Another Code: R—Door of Memory was in development for Wii. Now, with the game's Japanese release almost upon us, new details have been revealed about this sequel to DS adventure game Trace Memory (which was known as Another Code in Japan). Set two years after the events of Trace Memory, Another Code: R once again focuses on the exploits of Ashley Robbins. Now 16 years old, Ashley has been invited by her estranged father to go camping at Lake Juliet—the place where her mother was killed 13 years prior. As you explore the area and use the Wii Remote to interact with various objects (such as a camera and a water-testing kit), you'll solve puzzles, converse with characters to advance the plot, choose from branching story paths, and eventually unlock Ashley's memories of the past. There's no word about a North American release, but hopefully that announcement will come at—ahem—*another* time. **—CHRIS H.**





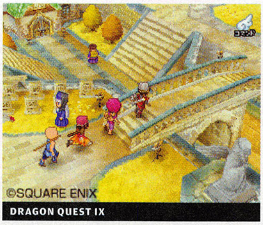




NEWS FROM JAPAN

X Marks the Wii

At a recent press even in Japan, Yuji Horii dropped a bombshell about the future of Dragon Quest. After announcing the Japanese release date (March 28th) and retail price (5980 yen, or roughly $68) for the upcoming DS release of **Dragon Quest IX**, the series' creator mentioned that the next installment was already in development—for Wii. No details were shared, but **Dragon Quest X** is the highest-profile third-party release ever announced for the platform, and is expected to sell several million copies. In Japan, that is. In America, Dragon Quest is still working to find an audience, and no less a man than Nintendo CEO Satoru Iwata took the stage to address that issue. Iwata compared Dragon Quest to the Brain Age series, noting both were said to be "unmarketable" in the West, and declared he would like to collaborate closely with Square Enix to raise the series' international appeal. **—CASEY L.**

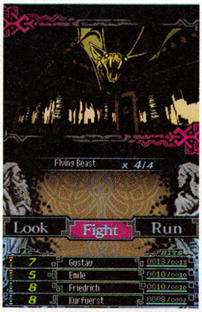

©SQUARE ENIX

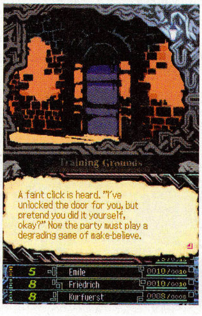
DRAGON QUEST IX

Spire for Hire

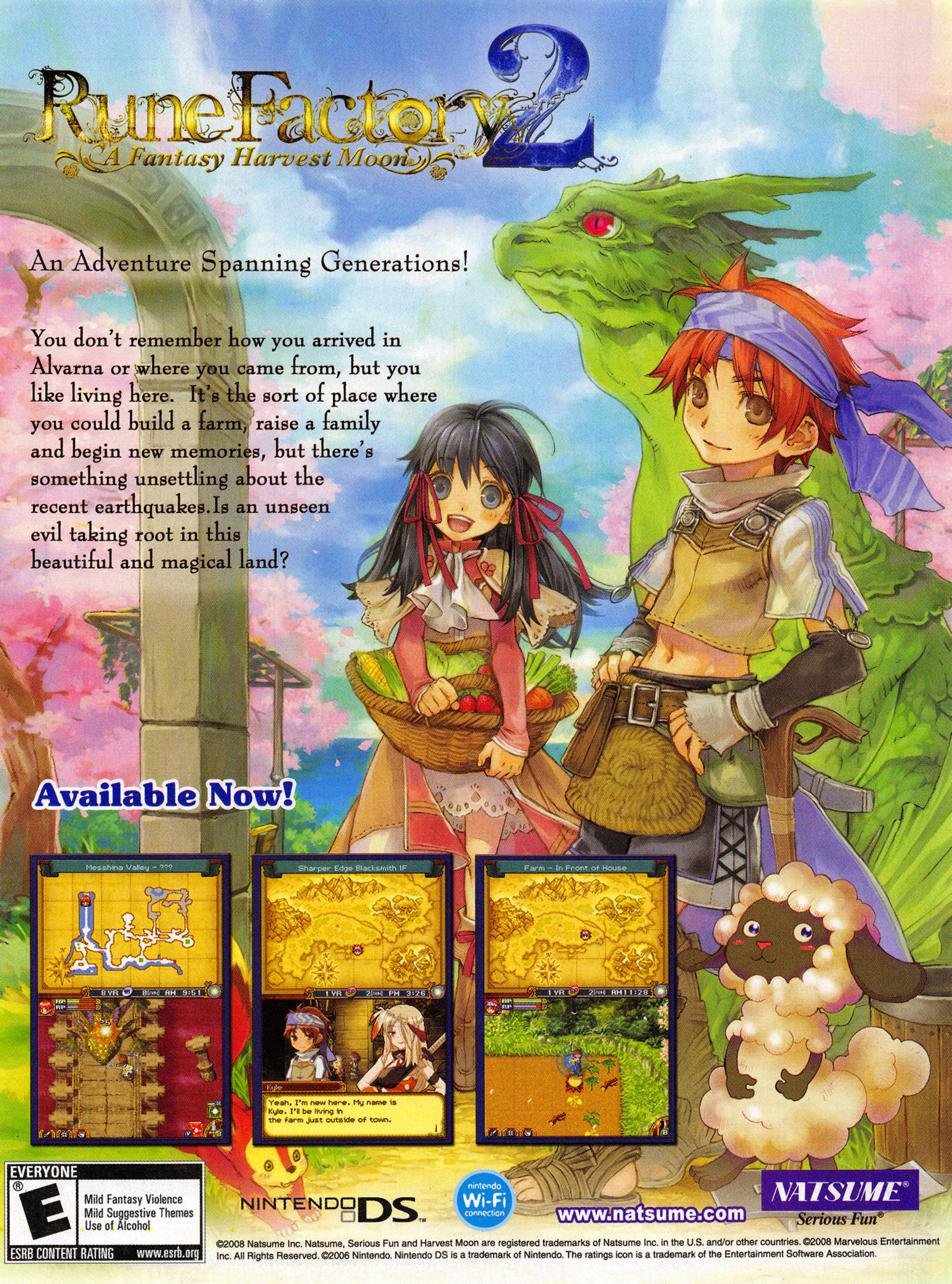
Atlus has shed light on upcoming DS RPG **The Dark Spire**. Two graphic styles give players very different experiences.

Harking back to the oldest of old-school computer RPGs, The Dark Spire is a stripped-down first-person dungeon-crawler with two ways for you to view the action. The first look offers simple white line drawings on a black background—it feels one step removed from the original text adventure. The other view has a stylized contemporary comic-book feel with a subdued color scheme. In both cases you'll lead a team of explorers into the Archmage Tyrhung's tower of mist and shadow in search of big-time treasure. Gameplay is as classic as it comes. As you encounter monsters and items, you'll choose from menu commands to determine your actions, allowing you to equip, attack, and defend your way to victory. As of press time Atlus had not released information about the game's dual-screen features, but more details are likely to surface before the title's March release. **—GEORGE S.**




Training Grounds

A faint click is heard. "I've unlocked the door for you, but pretend you did it yourself, okay?" Now the party must play a degrading game of make-believe.



Rune Factory 2

A Fantasy Harvest Moon

An Adventure Spanning Generations!

You don't remember how you arrived in Alvarna or where you came from, but you like living here. It's the sort of place where you could build a farm, raise a family and begin new memories, but there's something unsettling about the recent earthquakes.Is an unseen evil taking root in this beautiful and magical land?

Available Now!

Messhina Valley - ???
8 YR
8
AM 9:51
HP
RP
Sharper Edge Blacksmith 1F
1 YR
2
PM 3:26
Kyle
Farm - In Front of House
1 YR
2
AM11:28
HP
RP

Yeah, I'm new here. My name is
Kyle. I'll be living in
the farm just outside of town.

EVERYONE

E

Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS™

nintendo Wi-Fi connection

www.natsume.com

NATSUME®
Serious Fun®

©2008 Natsume Inc. Natsume, Serious Fun and Harvest Moon are registered trademarks of Natsume Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. ©2008 Marvelous Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved. ©2006 Nintendo. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

GAME WATCH FORECAST

Wii		
Arc Rise Fantasia	XSEED/Marvelous USA	SPR 09
Battle Rage	Destineer	2/09
Brave: A Warrior's Tale	SouthPeak	2/09
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars–Director's Cut	Ubisoft	3/09
Burger Island	Destineer	3/09
The Conduit	Sega	SPR 09
Cate West: The Vanishing Files	Destineer	3/09
Cradle of Rome	Destineer	2/09
Crayola Colorful World	Crave	3/09
Cursed Mountain	Deep Silver	2009
Dance Dance Revolution: Disney Grooves	Konami	3/09
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	Capcom	2/09
Deadly Creatures	THQ	2/09
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto	TBA
DiRT 2*	Codemasters	2009
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two	3/09
EA Sports Active	Electronic Arts	SPR 09
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	Square Enix	3/09
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Atari	5/09
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Help Wanted	Hudson	SUM 09
The House of the Dead: Overkill	Sega	2/09
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Klonoa	Namco Bandai	Q2 09
Little King's Story	XSEED	2/09
MadWorld	Sega	3/09
Major Minor's Majestic March	Majesco	3/09
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	Hudson	SPR 09
Monster Pals	Crave	3/09
Monsters vs. Aliens	Activision	3/09
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	XSEED	2nd Half 09
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis	Nintendo	3/09
New Play Control! Pikmin	Nintendo	3/09
No More Heroes: Desperate Struggle	TBA	2010
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	D3Publisher	2/09
Overlord Dark Legend	Codemasters	1st Half 09
Pirateology	Codemasters	TBA
Pirates vs. Ninjas Dodgeball	SouthPeak	3/09
Play the World	DreamCatcher	3/09
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009	Konami	2009
Professor Heinz Wolff's Gravity	Deep Silver	2/09
Punch-Out!!	Nintendo	TBA
Puzzle Challenges and More!	Crave	2/09
Puzzle Kingdoms	Zoo Games	Q1 09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	Atari	3/09
Real Heroes: Firefighter	Conspiracy	Q2 09
Roogoo Twisted Towers	SouthPeak	2/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rune Factory Frontier	XSEED/ Marvelous USA	3/09
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	2009
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	2009
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	2009
Skate City Heroes	Zoo	Q1 09
Solitaire & Mahjong	Crave	2/09
Sonic and the Black Knight	Sega	3/09
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Story Hour Adventures	Zoo	2009
Story Hour Fairy Tales	Zoo	2009
Super PickUps	XS Games	Q1 09
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*	Ubisoft	9/09
Trivial Pursuit	Electronic Arts	Q2 09
We Ski & Snowboard	Namco Bandai	3/09
Wii Sports Resort	Nintendo	SPR 09
NINTENDO DS		
Again: Eye of Providence	Tecmo	SPR 09
American Popstar: Road to Celebrity	Ubisoft	3/09
Animal Planet	Activision	3/09
Avalon Code	XSEED/Marvelous USA	3/09
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Blue Dragon Plus	Ignition	3/09
Boing! Docomodake	Ignition	3/09
Brave: Shaman's Challenge	SouthPeak	2/09
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars–Director's Cut	Ubisoft	3/09
Chicken Hunter Star Karts	MumboJumbo	3/09
The Dark Spire	Atlus	3/09
de Blob	THQ	3/09
DinoPets	Destineer	3/09
DiRT 2*	Codemasters	2009
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	Square Enix	2/09
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Master	DreamCatcher	4/09
Dreamer: Top Model	DreamCatcher	3/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	2009
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	Square Enix	3/09
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	Nintendo	1st Half 09
Flower, Sun, and Rain	XSEED/Marvelous USA	3/09
Gardening Mama	Majesco	3/09
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Atari	5/09
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	Rockstar	Q2 09
Guitar Hero Modern Hits	Activision	3/09
The Hardy Boys: Treasure on the Tracks	Sega	SPR 09
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	Electronic Arts	Q1 09
Hot 'n' Cold	Majesco	3/09
The Humans	Deep Silver	4/09
Imagine Cheerleader	Ubisoft	2/09
Imagine Family Doctor	Ubisoft	2/09
Imagine Ice Champions	Ubisoft	3/09
Infinite Space	Sega	2009
Jagged Alliance	Empire	2/09
Jake Power Handyman	Ubisoft	3/09
JoJo's Fashion Show	Ubisoft	2/09
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	Square Enix	2009
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Learn Chess	DreamCatcher	3/09
Little Magician's Magic Adventure	Konami	Q1 09
Lux-Pain	Ignition	3/09
Mario & Luigi RPG 3*	Nintendo	2009
Matchstick	DreamCatcher	3/09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Black Ace	Capcom	8/09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker	Capcom	8/09
Monster Pals	Crave	3/09
Monsters Racers	Koei	2009
Monsters vs. Aliens	Activision	3/09
Music Star: Pop Star	DreamCatcher	2/09
My DoItAll	Tomy	2/09
My Fashion Studio Paris Collection	Ubisoft	2/09
My Personal Diary	DreamCatcher	2/09
My World, My Way	Atlus	2/09
Overlord Minions	Codemasters	1st Half 09
Paint by DS	DreamCatcher	3/09
Peggle: Dual Shot	PopCap	3/09
Personal Trainer: Walking	Nintendo	2009
Pet Vet Down Under	Deep Silver	TBA
Petz Horseshoe Ranch	Ubisoft	2/09
Pimp My Ride 2	Activision	3/09
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pirateology	Codemasters	TBA
Pokémon Platinum	Nintendo	3/09
Professor Heinz Wolff's Gravity	Deep Silver	2/09
Puzzle Kingdoms	Zoo Games	Q1 09
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3Publisher	2/09
Rhythm Heaven	Nintendo	1st Half 09
Roogoo Attack	SouthPeak	2/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sands of Destruction	Sega	SUM 09
Sarah: Keeper of the Unicorn	DreamCatcher	3/09
Steel Princess	Atlus	3/09
Suikoden: Tierkreis	Konami	Q1 09
TrackMania DS	Atlus	3/09
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	Square Enix	3/09
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	Q1 09
Zoo Quest	DreamCatcher	2/09
Zubo	Electronic Arts	SPR 09

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE

BITS OF TID

Enhanced for Wii

GameCube classics return with Wii controls.

NEW PLAY CONTROL!
Wii
PIKMIN
Play Classic GameCube games with enhanced Wii controls!

Nintendo has announced that updated versions of the hit GameCube games Pikmin and Mario Power Tennis will be coming to Wii this March. Known as New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis and New Play Control! Pikmin, the games will feature the same content as their original versions, but with all-new Wii-specific controls.

King of Clubs

Club Nintendo is here!

The long-awaited Club Nintendo, which rewards Nintendo loyalists with free goodies, has launched at club.nintendo.com. By registering games and filling out surveys, members can earn coins that can be exchanged for prizes such as Hanafuda cards or an exclusive Game & Watch Collection for DS.

Going Platinum

The latest Pokémon adventure comes to the US in March.

Nintendo has announced that Pokémon Platinum Version, the follow-up to Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl, will arrive in North America on March 22. The game features never-before-seen forms of powerful Pokémon, including Giratina's Origin Forme, and introduces the Distortion World, another world that appears within Sinnoh and defies the laws of Time and Space. Stay tuned for more info!

IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND!
Big Bang MINI
Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection
NINTENDO DS
Big Bang MINI
EVERYONE E ESRB
SOUTHPEAK

"FIREWORKS AND TOP-DOWN SHOOTING. TOGETHER AT LAST."

"BIG BANG MINI IS DEFINITELY GOING TO BE WORTH A LOOK FOR DS OWNERS." ... ign.com

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Fantasy Violence

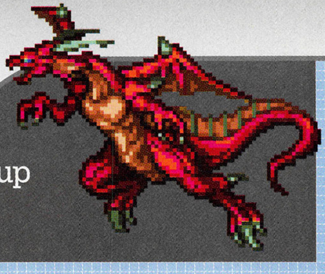
NINTENDO DS™

Arkedo studio

SOUTHPEAK GAMES
www.southpeakgames.com

Big Bang Mini © 2008 Arkedo. Copyright © 2008 SouthPeak Interactive Corporation. "SouthPeak", "SouthPeak Interactive", "SouthPeak Games" and their related logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of SouthPeak Interactive Corporation. All rights reserved. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo.

Wii Channels



Get a dose of classic RPG fun with our roundup of the best role-playing titles on Virtual Console. Plus: Reviews, previews, and more.

In This Section

VIRTUAL CONSOLE FEATURE
Classic RPG Roundup

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Bit Trip Beat

WiiWARE UPDATE
Evasive Space

RESULTS
Most-Wanted Virtual Console Games

8
WiiWARE REVIEWS

- BIG KAHUNA PARTY
- BOINGZ
- BRUISER & SCRATCH
- HOCKEY ALLSTAR SHOOTOUT
- PIT CREW PANIC!
- SPACE INVADERS GET EVEN
- STRONG BAD EPISODE 5: 8-BIT IS ENOUGH
- SUDOKU CHALLENGE!

4
VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS

- BOOGERMAN
- ENDURO RACER
- METAL SLUG 2
- SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

Role With It

RPG SPECIAL

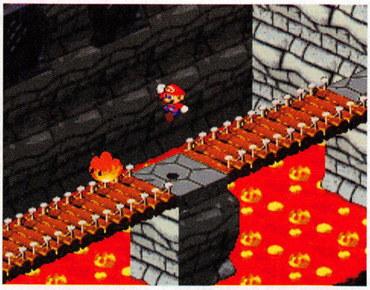
Want to build up your collection of can't-miss RPGs? Start by downloading these classics on Virtual Console.

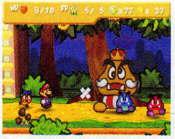
The late '80s and early '90s were very good to RPG fans, with every console playing host to magic-users and sword-wielders. Though Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest reigned, there were many other contenders for the crown. You can't go wrong by downloading any of these Virtual Console RPGs, which range from the traditional to the strategic to the more action-oriented. —GEORGE S.

Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1996

Since his first scrapes with Donkey Kong, Mario has gained plenty of experience in beating up baddies, but isometric-view adventure Super Mario RPG gave the hero his first opportunity to actually earn experience points. It also provided more storyline than any previous Mario title even though the conflict boils down to Mario's familiar save-the-kingdom theme. Developed by the RPG masters at Square, the game has Mario and a cast of characters both new and established taking on villain Smithy's gang. Mario still stomps enemies, but he does so by way of a menu selection, with the incorporation of a few action and timing-based elements that fit in Mario's comfort zone. Players who weren't tuned to the ways of the RPG still gave Legend of the Seven Stars a spin because of Mario, opening doors for other mainstream-character role-players, such as Square's Kingdom Hearts.

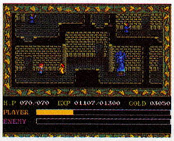




Paper Mario

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 64
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 2001

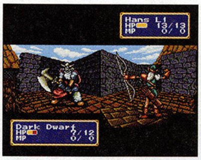
Five years after Super Mario RPG was released on the Super NES, Mario returned to turn-based battle on the N64, only in flattened form. The cutout-style graphic look of Paper Mario's characters and background elements may recall that of platformer Yoshi's Story, but the gameplay is pure action-RPG. Branching paths and a series of pipes give Mario many avenues to explore over the course of the nonlinear adventure. A collection of items gives him and his revolving collection of sidekicks the advantage in battle. You can fight using pure strategy, or put a little punctuation on any attack or defensive gesture by pushing buttons at the point of impact.



Ys Book I & II

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX16
PUBLISHER: HUDSON/ NIHON FALCOM
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1990

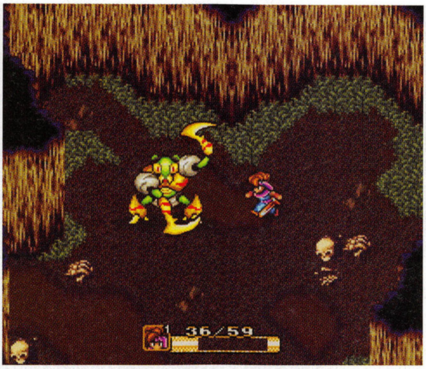
Known for its catchy soundtrack and hardware-pushing special effects, the compilation of the first two Ys titles, released in 1990 for the TurboGrafx16, garnered much-deserved attention from the RPG faithful. While most RPGs of its time heaped on large teams of playable characters, Ys relies on only red-haired swordsman Adol Christin, who can execute physical and magical attacks with simple directional commands on the Control Pad. The adventures are being rejiggered for the DS for a February release, but they're available now, in original form, via Virtual Console.



Shining Force

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

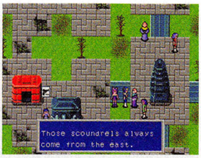
A tactical fighter that draws comparisons to the Fire Emblem series, Shining Force offers clean and simple rules, dazzling battle graphics, and great characters that you'll feel compelled to keep alive. The land of Rune has experienced a thousand years of peace, but you've come along just in time for bad guys Kane and King Ramladu to start causing trouble with a plot to resurrect the Dark Dragon. Luckily, you've got strong, silent Max on your side, and command over the Powers of Light.



Secret of Mana

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

More action-based than most RPGs, Square's tale of a magic sword and a power-giving tree uses a ring menu as an alternative to subscreens; the system always keeps you in the game, even when you're switching weapons. Secret of Mana starts as a solo adventure, but allows you to bring in two more players as the story advances. You can use Classic Controllers or GameCube Controllers to accommodate the three-player team. The game doesn't offer the epic depth of Square's Final Fantasy series or Chrono Trigger (which arrived in 1995), but it does deliver a fun playing experience that was unique for its time.

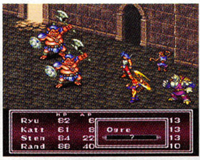


Those scoundrels always come from the east.

Phantasy Star II

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1989

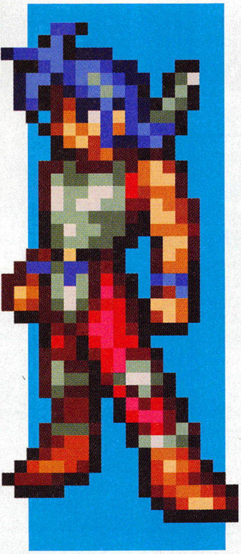
The second chapter of the Phantasy Star series (and the first for the Sega Genesis) is considered by some RPG aficionados to be one of the greatest games of its time thanks to a robust turn-based, four-character fighting system and a lengthy story that takes you across the Algol star system in search of the villain Dark Force and a supercomputer known as the Mother Brain (no relationship to Samus Aran's nemesis). Eight characters, each with different weapon specialties and fighting techniques, give you lots of fighting options. Phantasy Star III: Generations of Doom is also part of the Virtual Console collection.

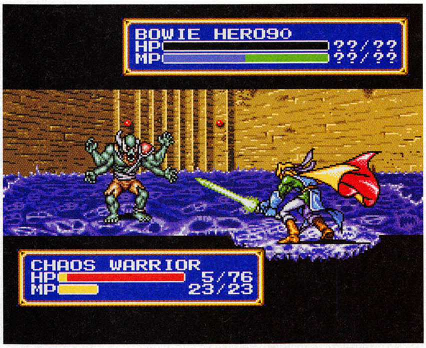


Breath of Fire II

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1995

Though the RPG trend was turning to action-adventure alternatives in the mid '90s, Capcom's Breath of Fire stuck to the classic turn-based formula, offering big overview maps for easy world navigation, closer field maps, and epic sword-and-spell battles. Though the first two games in the series are separated by 500 years in story time, they share some locations and basic features. Breath of Fire II follows young warriors Ryu and Bow on a quest to clear their names and get to the bottom of an evil plot. With abilities such as shaman fusing and dragon transformation, the pair (and six more playable characters) is prepared to take on the world.

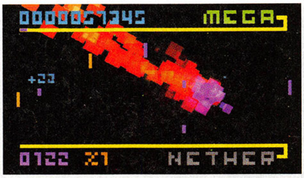


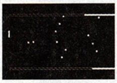


Shining Force II

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

A longer and more open-ended game than the original title, Shining Force II follows a new team, led by swordsman Bowie, that is charged with stopping the resurrection of another world-rocking baddie: Zeon, the Devil King. The monarch of Granseal has fallen ill, the princess has been kidnapped, and the door to the Devil King's home has been blown wide open. Tactical fighting is a big part of the game, but exploration plays a role, too, giving you a well-rounded adventure.





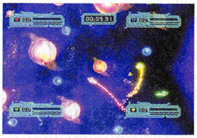
Bounce to the Beat

Rhythm meets retro in unique WiiWare title *Bit.Trip: Beat*.

Though at first glance Aksys Games's Bit.Trip: Beat looks like a reimagining of Pong, there's actually a good deal more going on beneath that facade. Not in terms of play mechanics—you simply deflect incoming pixel-like blocks with your paddle (controlled by rotating the Wii Remote)—but the rhythm-based gameplay is all about timing your actions in sync with the pumping music; the sounds of blocks bouncing off your paddle even become part of the tune. As you proceed through the game's three levels, the block patterns become increasingly complex (especially during boss battles), and things get even more chaotic when up to four players team up in co-op mode. The better you play, the flashier the visuals become, but conversely, the graphics will turn black-and-white and the only sounds you'll be left with are bleeps and bloops if you do poorly. The developers at Gaijin Games created Bit.Trip: Beat with a philosophy of focusing upon gaming's most basic concepts—simplicity and fun—to create a rewarding experience, and they intend to follow it up with five additional Bit.Trip releases. —**CHRIS H.**

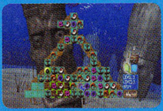
Evade Your Friends

Last issue we previewed Evasive Space, a galactic action game from Yuke's and High Voltage Software in which you point with the Wii Remote to guide a ship through mazelike levels while avoiding hazards and collecting items (but not shooting enemies; your ship has no offensive capabilities). Now we've had a look at the game's local multiplayer component. Up to four players can compete or team up in six modes, in which you'll rescue spacemen or collect objects while racing the clock or trying to attain a certain score.



EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



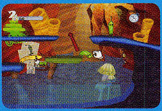
BIG KAHUNA PARTY

PUBLISHER: **REFLEXIVE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Less a party and more a tile-matching puzzle game, Big Kahuna Party will be familiar to anyone who's ever played titles like Bejeweled or Jewel Quest. Other than the Wii point-and-click controls, however, the only notable inclusion is an interactive aquarium. If you're a casual puzzle fan with a fish obsession (or you don't have access to a freeware version), you might enjoy this game; everyone else can pass. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



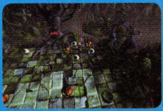
BOINGZ

PUBLISHER: **REALARCADE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

In Boingz, you're tasked with getting some elastic creatures to their respective goals by stretching them like rubber bands. Simply pull on their antennae and let go to send them flying. It works well for the most part thanks to the solid physics (though getting the Boingz to go where you want can be frustrating at times), and there's some challenge as you get through the game's 30 levels—especially if you're trying to earn medals. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



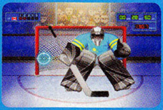
BRUISER & SCRATCH

PUBLISHER: **STEEL PENNY GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

You know those block-pushing puzzles in games like Tomb Raider and The Legend of Zelda? That's pretty much Bruiser & Scratch in a nutshell. It's certainly not the most exciting concept, but the puzzles are well designed and fairly challenging, and there are plenty of them. It's annoying that there's no way to undo or reset when you make a mistake, though, and the presentation is lacking. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



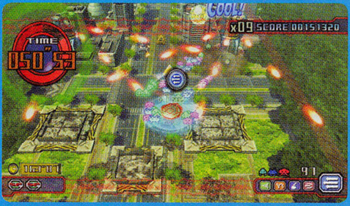
HOCKEY ALLSTAR SHOOTOUT

PUBLISHER: **BIG BLUE BUBBLE**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Since Hockey Allstar Shootout focuses exclusively on using gestures to shoot a puck into a net, you'd think the developers could have got that one thing right. However, that's not the case. Unresponsive barely begins to describe the controls; you fight the aiming cursor every step of the way, and the game seems to read your motions as only vague suggestions. It's unattractive, too. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



SPACE INVADERS GET EVEN

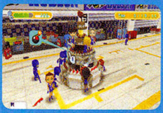
PUBLISHER: **TAITO/SQUARE ENIX** • GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Steve T's Pick

Three decades after failing in their bid to take over our planet, the ever-persistent Space Invaders are back to give it another go. The difference this time is that you're in control of our would-be conquerors, steering one of their UFOs via the Control Stick and using the Wii Remote to fire waves of the familiar, pixelated invaders. Fans of the classic arcade game will get a huge kick out of this novel role reversal, but Get Even also stands on its own as a quality shooter. Three additional mission packs are available for 500 points each, and offer quite a bit of extra content for the price.

Recommended

WiiWare



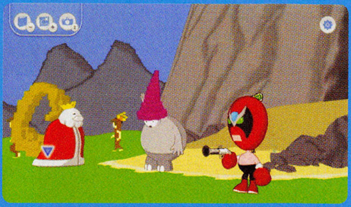
PIT CREW PANIC!

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

When I played Pit Crew Panic! for last month's preview, I thought it looked promising but needed more time in development. Unfortunately, it didn't get that extra time. Although the basic point-and-click gameplay is fun (at least once you unlock the advanced doohickeys to repair), the selectability regions of objects and characters are poor, and it's hard to tell which subjects are in use by other players in multiplayer mode. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



STRONG BAD EPISODE 5: 8-BIT IS ENOUGH

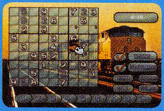
PUBLISHER: **TELLTALE** • **GENRE:** **ADVENTURE**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Chris H's Pick

More than just the conclusion of the Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People series, 8-Bit Is Enough is a celebration of the video games of days gone by. Even if you're not a huge point-and-click-adventure fan, you'll enjoy interacting with parodies of classic genres and picking up on the numerous game references. 8-Bit Is Enough does seem slightly shorter and easier than previous Strong Bad titles, but there are plenty of cool changes to the formula (such a first-person section and the ability to acquire party members), and the humor and writing are spot-on.

Recommended

WiiWare



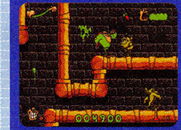
SUDOKU CHALLENGE!

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

As its title implies, Sudoku Challenge! provides a solid game of sudoku—and that's about it. Frills are low; you get three difficulty settings and the option of playing either normal sudoku or Grand Sudoku, which is essentially five puzzles in one. At only 500 points, however, you get your money's worth. This game won't turn anyone into a sudoku convert, but it should satisfy fans. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



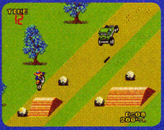
BOOGERMAN

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **INTERPLAY**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Look past the gross-out gimmick, and Boogerman is a fairly run-of-the-mill side-scroller. It boasts some impressive animation (as was typical of Interplay games in those days), but the level design is incredibly repetitive, and sloppy collision detection leads to frustrating deaths. If you have a first-grader's sense of humor, then by all means. Otherwise, *pick* something else. —**STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



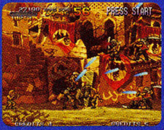
ENDURO RACER

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **RACING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

Enduro Racer is kind of like Excitebike with an isometric camera perspective, only not quite as fun. The early stages require little more than jamming down the accelerator and occasionally maneuvering around road hazards. (It's not a difficult task when the tracks are so repetitive that you can easily remember what's coming up.) Thankfully, later stages provide more of a challenge. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



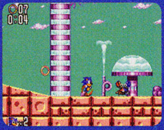
METAL SLUG 2

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **SNK/D4 ENTERPRISE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1998**

Yes, it's certainly fun to run around with a buddy and shoot everything in sight in this good-looking, well-animated arcade hit, but the frequent bouts of slowdown hamper the overall experience. And as with the first game, there's no real reason to purchase this Virtual Console release when the great Metal Slug Anthology for Wii is already on store shelves. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

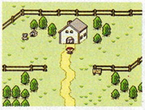
PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**

In my review of the original Sonic the Hedgehog for Master System, I said the game's value was limited to its standing as a historical curiosity, and that pretty much holds true for the sequel. Sure, it's a significant improvement over its predecessor, but for an extra $3, you can get the Genesis version, which is one of the greatest platformers of all time. —**STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

WANTED!

Mother, the NES predecessor of the Super NES RPG EarthBound, was shown in North America many years ago but never released. Our readers want the game to finally get its due and come to the West, as evidenced by Mother's place atop their most-wanted NES Virtual Console games list.



READERS' MOST WANTED: NES

1 Mother (Japan only)
2 DuckTales
3 Final Fantasy
4 Mega Man 6
5 Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse

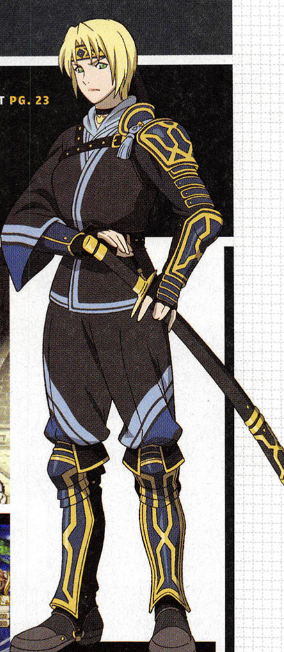
NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED: NES

1 Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse
2 Contra
3 DuckTales
4 Pro Wrestling
5 Baseball Stars

Next issue we'll list the most-wanted NeoGeo games, and in the following issue we'll learn the top picks from the Nintendo 64, but we can't do it without your input! Send your top five picks for **NeoGeo** and/or **Nintendo 64** games to **vcpoll@nintendopower.com** and we'll print the results in an upcoming issue. Note: This is for polling purposes only and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

AVALON CODE PG. 32
DEAD RISING: CHOP TILL YOU DROP PG. 33
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL PG. 24
LITTLE MAGICIAN'S MAGIC ADVENTURE PG. 26
LUX-PAIN PG. 25
MARIO & LUIGI RPG 3 PG. 27
PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX PG. 28
SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT PG. 23
SUIKODEN: TIERKREIS PG. 22
TOUCH MECHANIC PG. 26
WE SKI & SNOWBOARD PG. 28
ZUBO PG. 30



Rebel with a Cause

RPG SPECIAL

>SUIKODEN: TIERKREIS

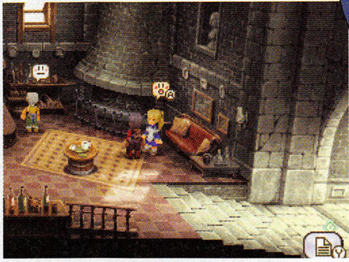
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2009**

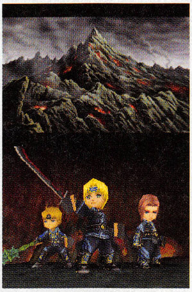
There's always more to the Suikoden games than meets the eye. For example, the series's first DS installment, Suikoden: Tierkreis, begins with a seemingly typical event—you (playing the part of a brash young lad) and your friends setting out to eliminate a group of aggressive beasts. But it isn't long before worlds literally collide right before your eyes, nearly indestructible monsters start appearing seemingly out of nowhere, an alternate-reality version of one of your pals show up, and a magic book grants you mysterious visions and magical powers.

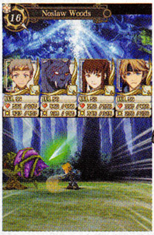
A journey to the big city to find out what the heck is going on turns into a massive ordeal, as you cross paths with the Order of the One True Way—a society that believes everything is preordained and can happen only according to their gospel. The Order allows no room for dissent, and its members are using military might to conquer villages and nations that disagree with their beliefs. They also have special agents on your trail that will stop at nothing to take your unusual book. Despite your hero's inexperience, he soon finds himself at the forefront of a rebellion against the Order, and you're tasked with establishing a headquarters, forging alliances, recruiting comrades, and dealing with enemy attacks and political maneuvering, not to mention the occasional betrayal.

Beneath its traditional, turn-based RPG surface, the game also houses a unique Wi-Fi (and local wireless) component. A few hours into the game you'll encounter gateways to parallel worlds—which happen to be housed on other players' DS systems. By sending one of your characters into the Infinity, as it's called, you'll allow another player to temporarily download and recruit the character into his party to complete special quests. These range from monster elimination to finding specific items to meeting various character races, and they offer a way for both the player who sent the character and the player who received him to earn extra experience and loot. Some items and side stories—even a special boss—can be encountered only during Wi-Fi play.

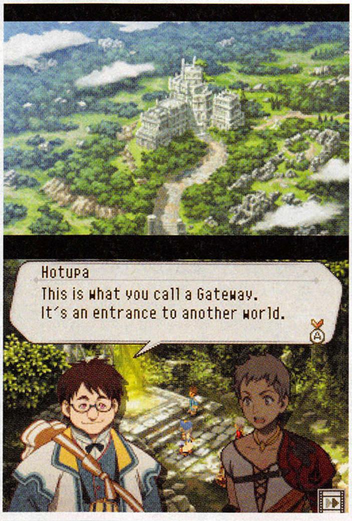
You'll be able to see for yourself why Suikoden's been going strong for more than a decade when Tierkreis arrives in stores this March. —**CHRIS H.**



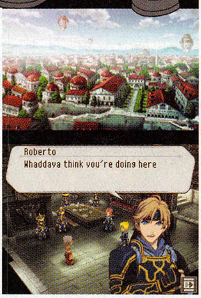




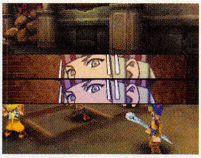
[Above] Fast-moving turn-based battles let you control parties of four.



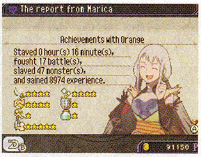
Hotupa
This is what you call a Gateway.
It's an entrance to another world.



Roberto
Whaddava think you're doing here



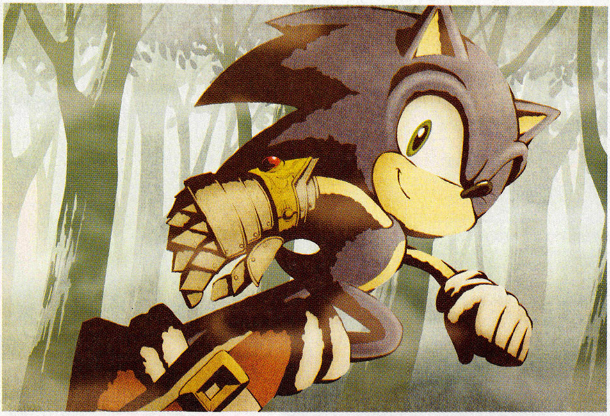
The Wi-Fi gateway lets you borrow alternate versions of characters and earn extra experience.

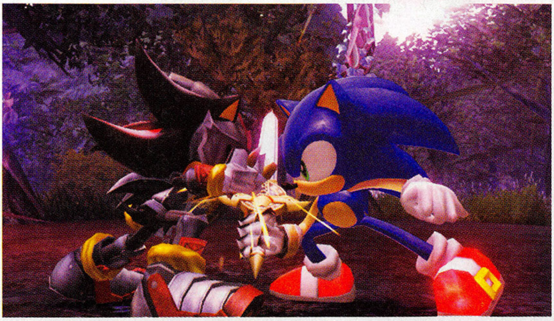


The report from Marica

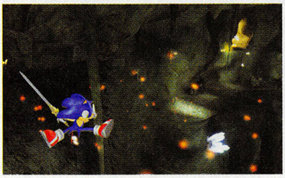
Achievements with Orange

Stayed 0 hour(s) 16 minute(s),
fought 17 battle(s),
slayed 47 monster(s),
and gained 8974 experience.





[Below] What's more frightening than a hedgehog with a sword? Two hedgehogs with swords.



Blue Steel

>SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2009**

Just when you think you know everything there is to know about Sonic and the Black Knight, new tidbits are revealed. Take the plot, for instance. You may already know that Sonic is summoned back to medieval times (with two chili dogs in his hands, no less—seriously) to combat an evil King Arthur. But it turns out that Arthur's magical scabbard, which makes him immortal, also is what transformed him into a villain. You learn this through animated woodcut-esque cut-scenes (based solely on what we've played so far, it seems only the opening cinema is prerendered 3-D). It's an art style that's certainly in line with the Arthurian theme—only with a Sonic twist, of course. This Sonic-ness is woven throughout the game, giving it a good amount of levity. Sonic's cocky, never-say-die attitude and use of modern lingo feel humorously out of place in the feudal setting, and it's a treat to see how the Sonic characters have been integrated into the Arthurian world, such as Shadow as Sir Lancelot, Knuckles as Sir Gawain, and Amy Rose as the Lady of the Lake. Fortunately for fans of Sonic's pals, both Shadow and Knuckles are playable in the multiplayer Battle mode once you've defeated them in the one-on-one duels in the single-player Adventure mode. The Battle mode allows you and up to three friends to go sword-to-sword against each other in a free-for-all deathmatch, or you can all work together to defeat a giant baddie as quickly as possible. Right now the multiplayer portion of the game is a bit rough around the edges, but we're hopeful it will be fine-tuned before Sonic and the Black Knight's release. **—JUSTIN C.**

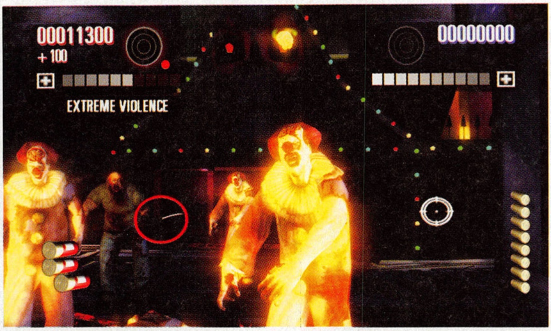
Through the Grinder

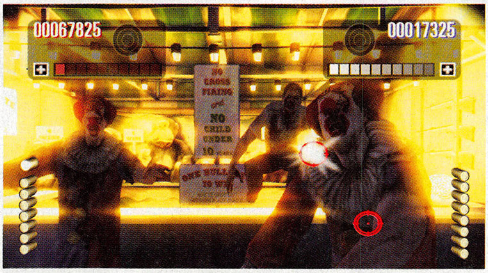
> THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HEADSTRONG GAMES**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2009**

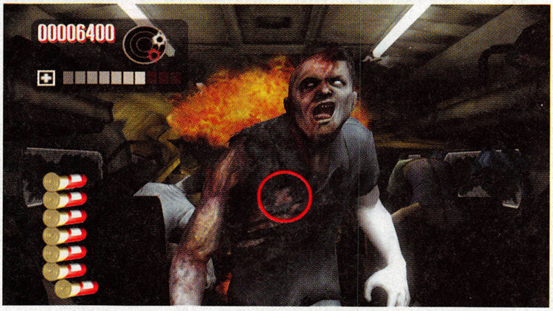
Blasting zombies is fun. That simple truth alone is probably enough to sell many of you on The House of the Dead: Overkill, the latest in Sega's mature-rated line of zombie-themed rail shooters (and occasional typing tutorials). But Overkill offers a new twist on this joyous activity by wrapping it in a unique grindhouse motif complete with film-grain filter, funky '70s soundtrack, obscenity-laden dialogue, and gleefully over-the-top gore. The result is an absolute riot—the developers obviously had a great time making this game and it shows. Better still, the disc is crammed with content (including a Director's Cut mode that offers additional commentary, extra cut-scenes, and alternate branching paths), and the level selection seems to offer plenty of variety. In addition to the carnival and hospital stages reported on previously, we've waded through a zombie-infested bayou and gunned down undead passengers aboard a runaway train. At the end of each level, certain achievements (saving civilians, racking up combos, etc.) are rewarded with cash, which you can spend to upgrade your firearms or purchase new ones. All of the weapons—even the standard-issue pistol—feel nice and meaty. With Overkill's release right around the corner, the only wrinkle is the occasional frame-rate hiccup. Hopefully that gets ironed out so as not to distract us from our zombie-blasting fun.

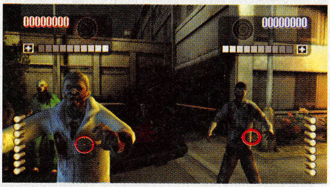
—KENT K.



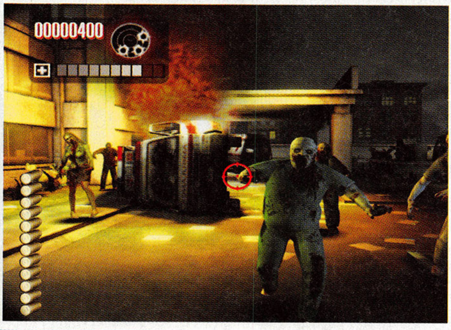


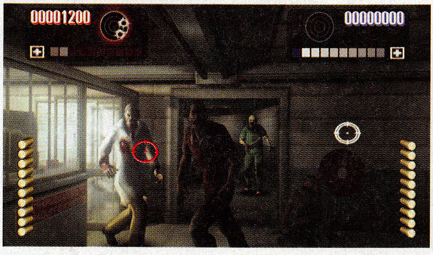
The zombie plague has infected everyone from clowns to doctors.





[Right] The American health care system is in bad shape.





No Pain, No Gain

>LUX-PAIN

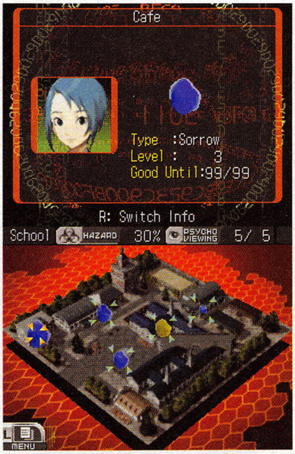
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **IGNITION**
DEVELOPER: **KILLAWARE** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2009**

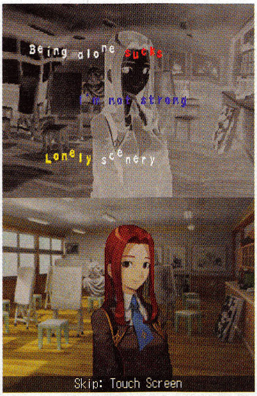
Bad things are happening in Kisaragi City. Violent crimes, suicides, extreme cruelty to animals, and worse; they all have dramatically increased—apparently due to a mysterious parasite called Silent that creates and feeds on negative emotions. More than 10,000 people have been infected by Silent in less than three months, so as an ashen-haired young man named Atsuki Saijo—a member of a psychic detective force called Fort—it's up to you to learn more about the phenomenon and stop it at its source in this point-and-click adventure.

Part of your investigation is pretty normal. Using the touch screen or traditional controls, you'll visit suspicious locations throughout seven regions of the city and talk to potential witnesses or criminals to gain information. You can ask about specific topics, and sometimes respond to questions with varied emotional reactions (happiness, anger, sorrow, etc.).

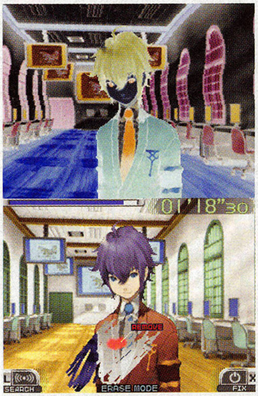
A significant part of the game takes place at Kisaragi School, where you go undercover to track down the recipient of an email that was sent by a group of Silent infectees before they took their own lives. The school is host to a wide variety of personalities—troublemaker Shinji Naruse, prospective journalist Mika Nozaki, fortune-teller Rui Yamase, and gun-loving math teacher Tadashi Yamato, to name a few—but most of them aren't ready to spill their secrets to a newcomer. That's where Atsuki's unique Sigma power comes into play. The power lets him see things beyond the visible world, including tangible emotions called Shinen. After activating Sigma, you'll tap the DS's lower screen to search for hidden Shinen, not only in people but in inanimate objects as well; once the search indicator turns red, you'll know that a Shinen is near. That's your cue to switch to erase mode, in which you'll use the stylus to chisel away the background and expose the Shinen, then press against the Shinen to eliminate and decode it. A decoded Shinen reveals itself as a strange jumble of words and phrases, usually providing clues about who to talk to or where to go next. Erasing Shinen also earns you experience points, which level up your psychic abilities.

Although your task of destroying Silent is daunting, you don't have to do it alone. You have a backup team that offers advice on what to do next, and there are other characters—such as Nami, a girl who can communicate psychically with animals—who want to lend their aid, too. The whole story is presented in gorgeous anime style and is supported by an abundance of quality voice work. Between its high production values and its unique premise, Lux-Pain promises to be, if nothing else, one of the most distinct adventures on DS. —**CHRIS H.**

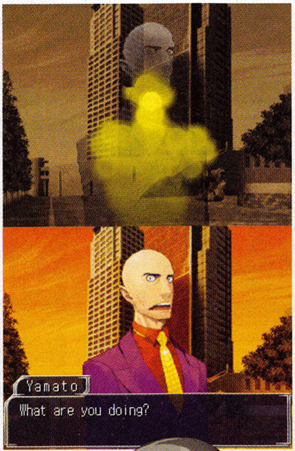

Cafe
Type :Sorrow
Level : 3
Good Until:99/99
R: Switch Info
School HAZARD 30% PSYCHO VIEWING 5/ 5

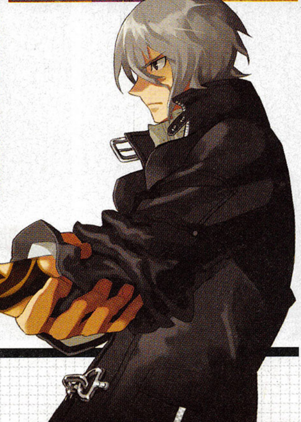

Being alone sucks
I'm not strong
Lonely scenery
Skip: Touch Screen

[Above] When you read a character's mind, the thoughts appear as moving words that float around the upper screen.



[Above] People's thoughts take the form of Shinen. You must use the stylus to scratch through the surface and extract them.


Yamato
What are you doing?

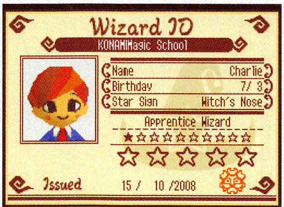


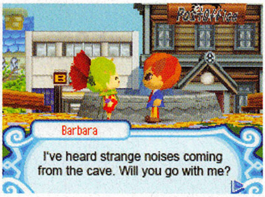
Abracadabra Crossing

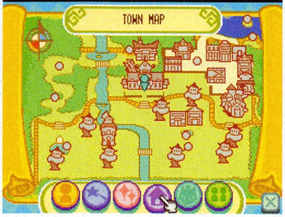
> LITTLE MAGICIAN'S MAGIC ADVENTURE

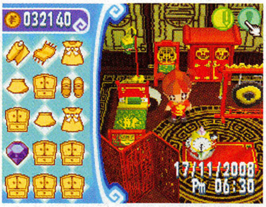
PLATFORM: **DS** • **PUBLISHER:** **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** • **RELEASE:** **MARCH 2009**

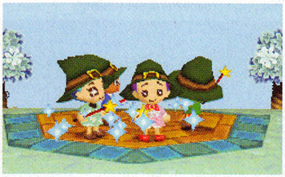
Mix equal parts Harry Potter and Animal Crossing, and you have the bubbling brew that is Little Magician's Magic Adventure, a life sim that enrolls you as a student of an animal-friendly magic academy. As in the Potter stories, you take classes to learn the intricacies of the wizarding world. And like in the Animal Crossing games, you customize your magic-user, communicate with other inhabitants of the world (150 unique characters), and accumulate items such as clothing and decorations (1,500 objects in all) for your dorm room. Your wand becomes a shovel, a fishing pole, a bug net, or a watering can with a flick of the stylus, and once a week, a mystery surfaces that you must travel across the game world to solve. As you do, insects and fish appear in droves; you can catch and sell them or give them to the library in exchange for ore. Magic incantations play a large part in solving mysteries, as does a symbol-based magic language. —**GEORGE S.**

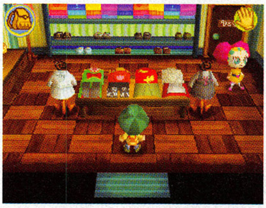

Wizard ID
KONAMIMagic School
Name Charlie
Birthday 7/ 3
Star Sign Witch's Nose
Apprentice Wizard
Issued 15 / 10 /2008


Barbara
I've heard strange noises coming from the cave. Will you go with me?







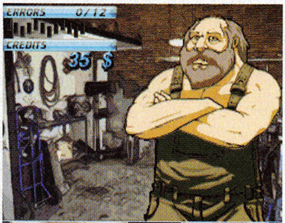


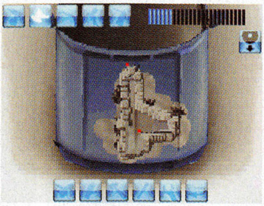
Going under the Hood

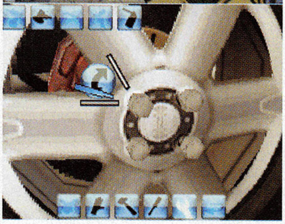
> TOUCH MECHANIC

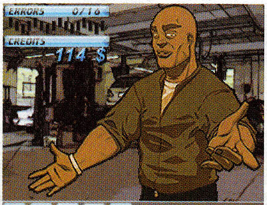
PLATFORM: **DS** • **PUBLISHER:** **ASPYR**
DEVELOPER: **KANDO** • **RELEASE:** **Q1 2009**

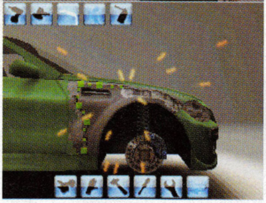
Trauma Center with cars—that pretty much sums up car-customization game Touch Mechanic. You're an up-and-coming mechanic who's trying to solve the mystery of his friend's car crash while being mentored by master grease monkey Captain Bob. Using only the stylus, you'll soup up people's vehicles with new parts and paint jobs. For example, one of the 75 missions has you changing a fender. You start out by selecting the sander tool and following the onscreen guiding dots. Once that's done, you use a power saw to cut off the old fender, then you attach the new one, weld it in place, and paint it. It really does feel like performing a surgical operation in Trauma Center, though you're trying to complete the procedure as quickly as possible for money instead of attempting to save someone's life. The longer the car service takes, the more money you lose. That's never a good thing, especially when you're trying to buy parts to build your own sweet ride that you'll enter in car shows. —**JUSTIN C.**

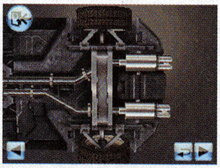












While there's no risk of anyone dying if you screw up, you will lose money.

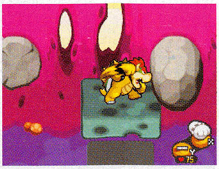
In the Bowels of Bowser

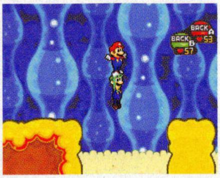
>MARIO & LUIGI RPG 3

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ALPHADREAM** • RELEASE: **2009**

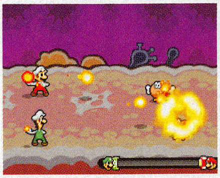
Mario and Luigi have been to some pretty unusual places on their many adventures, but Mario & Luigi RPG 3 (working title) may take them to the strangest location of all: inside Bowser himself. As we've learned from the latest screens and info out of Japan, the game's plot revolves around a mysterious ailment that's sweeping the Mushroom Kingdom and causing citizens to inflate to several times their normal size. While the bros and Princess Peach are trying to figure out how to stop the illness, Mario and Luigi are somehow swallowed by Bowser and—unbeknownst to him—end up affecting his actions from within. As Mario and Luigi navigate Bowser's innards (which consist of many areas), Bowser explores the external world. Similar to how the babies and adults were controlled separately in the previous Mario & Luigi game, you'll use different buttons to control the different characters: the A Button controls Mario, the B Button controls Luigi, and X and Y control Bowser. Naturally, there are enemies for both parties to fight; when you're playing as Bowser, you can even activate a touch-screen attack to use Goombas against your foes. We look forward to learning more about Mario, Luigi, and Bowser's bizarre alliance in the coming months. —**CHRIS H.**

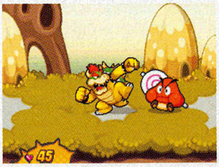
RPG SPECIAL

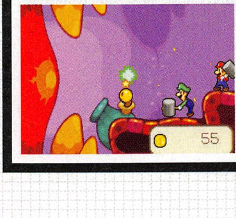


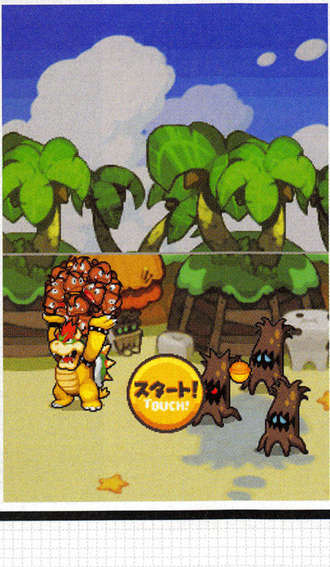

BACK A 53
BACK B 57

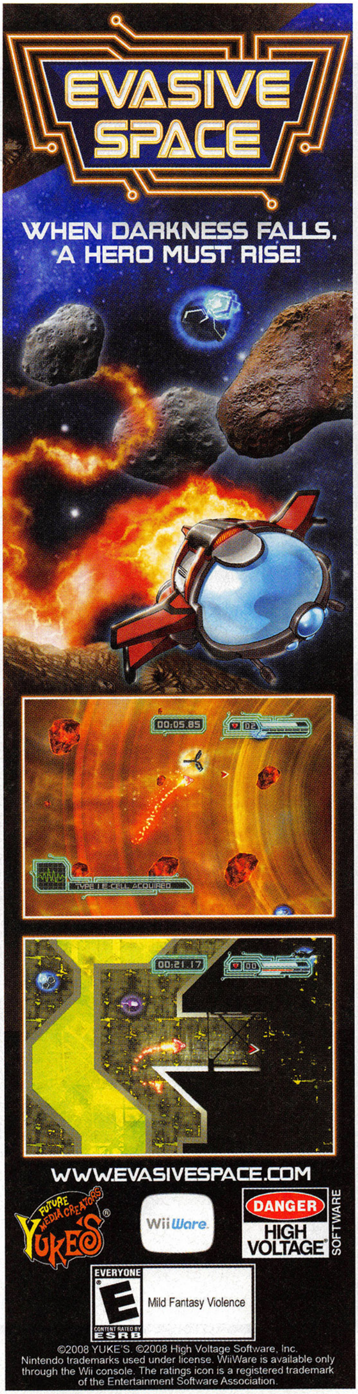
These screens (taken from a Japanese build of the game) show that Bowser is front and center in this adventure.









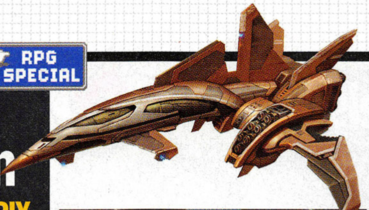


EVASIVE SPACE
WHEN DARKNESS FALLS, A HERO MUST RISE!
00:05.85
TYPE I E-CELL ACQUIRED
00:21.17
WWW.EVASIVESPACE.COM
FUTURE MEDIA CREATORS YUKE'S
Wii Ware
DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Fantasy Violence
©2008 YUKE'S. ©2008 High Voltage Software, Inc. Nintendo trademarks used under license. WiiWare is available only through the Wii console. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

RPG SPECIAL

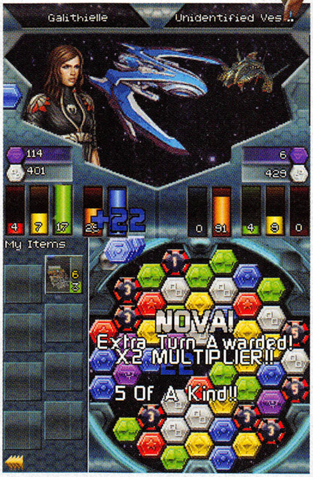
Six Degrees of Exploration

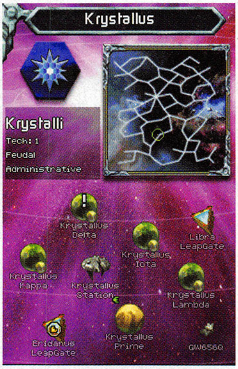
> PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX



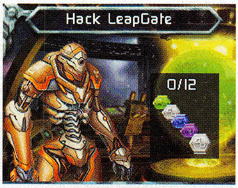
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER**
DEVELOPER: **INFINITE INTERACTIVE**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2009**

It would have been easy to simply slap a sci-fi theme on surprise-hit puzzle-RPG Puzzle Quest and call it a sequel, but Infinite Interactive has done a lot more with Puzzle Quest: Galactrix. A hexagonal puzzle board (in which the direction you move pieces to cause an elimination determines the direction from which new pieces emerge) is just the beginning; you've also got multiple ships to operate, a wide variety of new powers to use, 80 entire solar systems to explore, and more than 10 factions to deal with as you go on quests. During normal puzzles you'll line up trios of mines to damage your opponents, match colored gems to enhance your shields and special abilities, and chain together combos for maximum effectiveness, plus the game offers several types of minigames (for crafting items, mining for ore, or hacking warp gates, for example) that provide variations on the core gameplay. Two-player versus competition is included as well. —**CHRIS H.**


Galithielle
Unidentified Ves...
114
401
6
429
4
7
17
+22
0
91
4
9
0
My Items
NOVA!
Extra Turn Awarded!
X2 MULTIPLIER!!
5 Of A Kind!!


Krystallus
Krystalli
Tech: 1
Feudal
Administrative
Krystallus Delta
Libra LeapGate
Krystallus Iota
Krystallus Kappa
Krystallus Station
Krystallus Lambda
Eridanus LeapGate
Krystallus Prime
GW656Q

The Krystalli system shown above is just one of 80—yes, 80—solar systems you'll explore in the game.

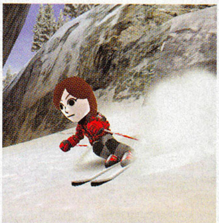

Hack LeapGate
0/12

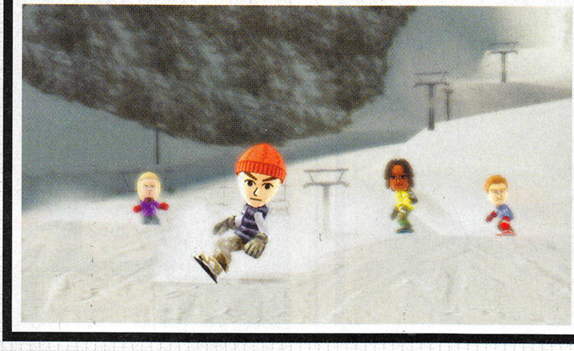
Fresh Powder

> WE SKI & SNOWBOARD

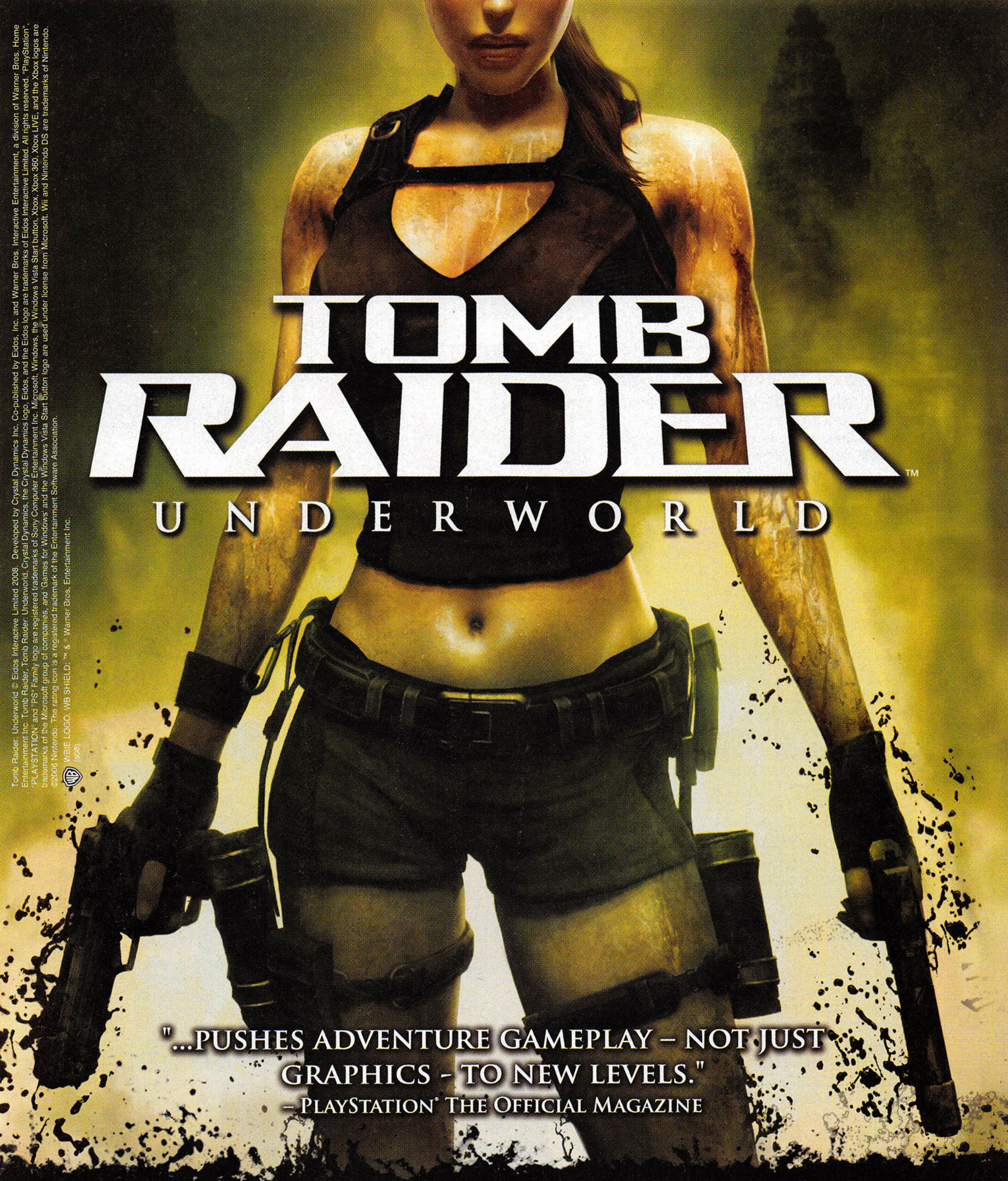
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2009**

By March the ice will have started to thaw and spring will be arriving, but Namco Bandai will let you continue to enjoy the fun of winter with We Ski & Snowboard. Like its predecessor, We Ski, the game allows you to use either the Balance Board or the Wii Remote and Nunchuk to easily control your character, but your options this time out are much greater. As you can tell from the game's title, you can use snowboards in addition to skis (and you can switch between them at almost any time), plus there are all-new environments to enjoy. If you want to simulate the leisurely pace of a Lake Tahoe-inspired ski park, you can head to Jamboree Ski Resort; if roughing it in the unclaimed wilderness is more your style, then venture to the precipitous peaks of Mt. Angrio. Either way, you'll have numerous challenges to undertake, such as races, stunt competitions, and collection missions. A variety of customization options allows you to tailor a Mii or a game-specific avatar to your liking, and a four-player split-screen mode lets you share the experience with friends. —**CHRIS H.**





[Below] You can hit the slopes with up to three friends or, if you're anti-social, three CPU-controlled buddies.


TOMB RAIDER™
UNDERWORLD
"...PUSHES ADVENTURE GAMEPLAY – NOT JUST GRAPHICS - TO NEW LEVELS."
– PLAYSTATION® THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
Games for Windows
XBOX 360 LIVE
PlayStation 2
PLAYSTATION 3
Wii
NINTENDO DS
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
eidos

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood
Mild Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
Violence

Tomb Raider: Underworld © Eidos Interactive Limited 2008. Developed by Crystal Dynamics Inc. Co-published by Eidos, Inc. and Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, a division of Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Inc. Tomb Raider, Tomb Raider: Underworld, Crystal Dynamics, the Crystal Dynamics logo, Eidos, and the Eidos logo are trademarks of Eidos Interactive Limited. All rights reserved. "PlayStation", "PLAYSTATION" and "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Windows, the Windows Vista Start button, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and 'Games for Windows' and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. Wii and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2006 Nintendo. The rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.
WBIE LOGO, WB SHIELD: ™ & © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.
(s08)

Beat Fighter

>ZUBO

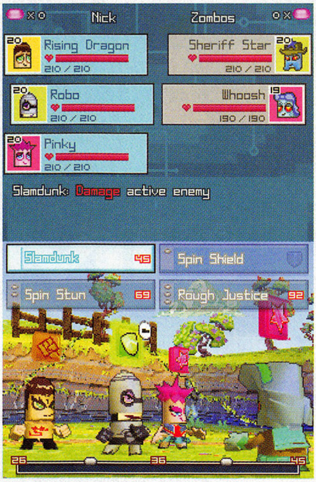
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CASUAL STUDIOS** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2009**

RPG SPECIAL

PREVIEW FEBRUARY '09

The odd title and the word "casual" in the developer's name might turn you off, but there's a surprisingly entertaining and original turn-based RPG lying beneath Zubo's surface. The game would stand out based on its visual style alone—it has a hip vinyl-doll aesthetic (akin to Hasbro's Mighty Muggs or similar toys). But Zubo isn't all visual appeal; it's also a joy to play. Create a party of up to three Zubos—talking creatures that resemble anything from punk rockers to RoboCop to green Martians—and venture across 10 locales on the planet Zubalon, finding more Zubo allies (there are 55 in all) and fighting the dastardly Big Head's Zombos (evil doppelganger versions of the Zubos). Combat is strictly a Zubo-versus-Zombo affair, with you giving the commands like a Pokémon Trainer. What really makes Zubo original, however, is when the attacks begin: two outlines surround the selected Zubo and you tap on the touch screen when the outlines converge in time with the beat of the music, à la Elite Beat Agents. The closer the outlines are to overlapping, the stronger your attacks will be. Don't expect to see the usual punches and kicks, though; the game has a lot of humor and charm that permeates everything, even the battles. The first Zubo you recruit, Pinky, can hurt Zombos by playing patty-cake, while another Zubo, Robo, can slam-dunk Zombos. Zombos can retaliate with attacks such as the Fart Juggle, which blasts a Zubo into the air and keeps it there with a series of well-timed gas expulsions.

There's more strategy involved than just selecting attacks and waiting for counterattacks, of course. In addition to dishing out extra punishment by tapping successfully, you'll gain Power Pills that serve as currency for the Zubos' mightiest attacks. Naturally, such attacks require slightly more-complex tapping, so there's some risk/reward as you decide whether to do weaker yet easier-to-perform maneuvers and stockpile Power Pills, or spend those Power Pills to unleash stronger assaults that have more opportunities for tapping errors. There's also strategy involved in regard to the Zubos/Zombos themselves. Each is associated with a color: pink performer, yellow fighter, or green defender. Zubo features a rock-paper-scissors mechanic in which, for example, fighters are stronger against performers but weaker against defenders. You don't really have to commit this to memory, though, since the game lets you know who has the advantage by showing a plus (strong) or minus (weak) symbol above your Zubos' heads. It always pays to have a well-balanced team, but it becomes particularly important when going head-to-head against a friend via a local wireless connection. —**JUSTIN C.**


×0 Nick

Zombos 0×

20 Rising Dragon 210 / 210

Sheriff Star 20 210 / 210

20 Robo 210 / 210

Whoosh 19 190 / 190

20 Pinky 210 / 210

Slamdunk: Damage active enemy

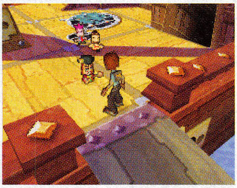
Slamdunk 45

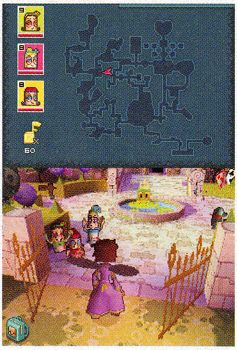
Spin Shield

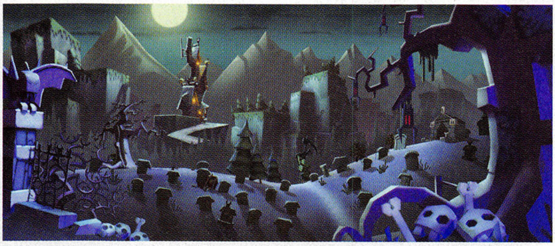
Spin Stun 69

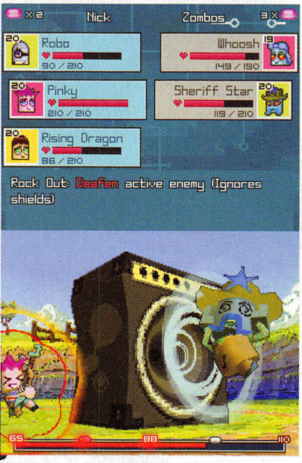
Rough Justice 92

[Above] Each Zubo/Zombo falls into one of three categories: defender, fighter, or performer. Robo, a defender, is weak against performer Zombos.








×2 Nick

Zombos 3×

20 Robo 90 / 210

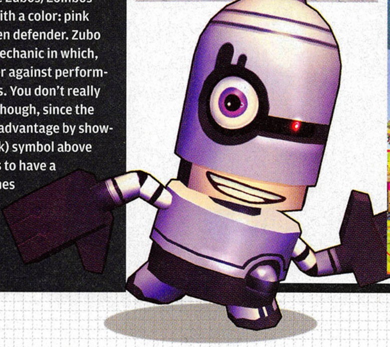
Whoosh 19 149 / 190

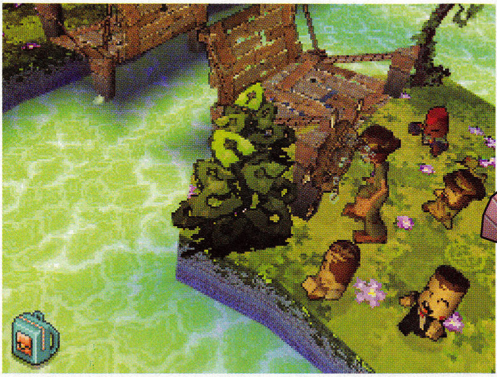
20 Pinky 210 / 210

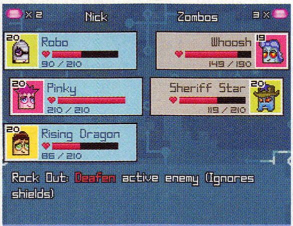
Sheriff Star 20 119 / 210

20 Rising Dragon 86 / 210

Rock Out: Deafen active enemy (Ignores shields)







x 2 Nick Zombos 3 x

20 Robo 90 / 210

20 Pinky 210 / 210

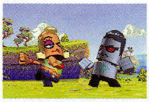
20 Rising Dragon 86 / 210

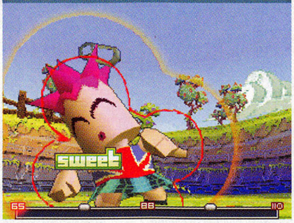
19 Whoosh 149 / 190

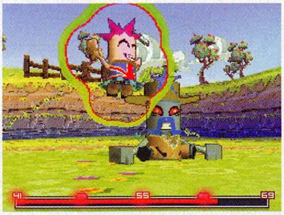
20 Sheriff Star 119 / 210

Rock Out: Deafen active enemy (Ignores shields)

[Right] The closer the red and yellow outlines are to each other when you tap the screen, the stronger your attacks will be.







Twists of Avalon

>AVALON CODE

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **MARVELOUS USA/XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **MATRIX** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2009**

RPG SPECIAL

PREVIEW FEBRUARY '09

I have to keep this preview to a single page?! That's barely enough space to get through the basic *concept* of Avalon Code. OK, deep breath...here we go!

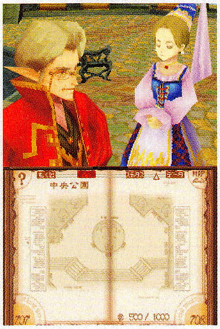
The world is ending and you've been chosen to record everything that's worth saving. You do that by traveling the land, recording the terrain with your automap, and then hitting every person, monster, flower, ancient relic, and shiny object you encounter with your Book of Prophecy. Once whacked, an object gets a page in your book (the lower screen of the DS) and you can view its "code," which is like DNA but simpler and oddly poetic. That morose writer in town is made of pure timidity—four parts illness, four parts cat. Fruit juice is made of five parts frost and two parts freedom. More interesting still, you can use your stylus to mess around with the codes. Whack a goblin in the heat of battle, and you'll discover that its resilience is due to the three parts stone in its code. Remove that, and the max HP of all goblins everywhere drops from 500 to 200 HP. Grab the illness from the timid writer and throw that onto the goblin to drop its HP further, from 200 to 50.

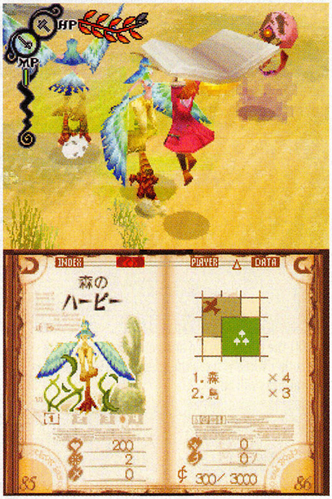
Naturally, plenty of forces in the world want your book for their own evil ends. It's lucky for you that the Book of Prophecy has such a lengthy chapter on weapons. You can scan everything from warhammers to crossbows on your adventure and then enhance them by following secret formulas: three parts steel, one part justice, and one part fire turn that garden-variety longsword into a flaming blade of vengeance. You can also get help from the four elementals of your world, who will happily align themselves to your cause—if you can find them.

As if the whole concept weren't bizarre enough, the developers at Matrix seem determined to make sure Avalon Code doesn't feel anything like any other action-RPG you've ever played. Traditional dungeons are eschewed in favor of a series of time trials, where each room times your ability to solve a simple puzzle or clear several waves of enemies. Power-ups are rarely found; they're most often earned for juggling foes so high that they *actually leave the planet's atmosphere*. And even the most fevered of boss battles typically involve a whole lot of paging through your book, replacing strong codes with weaker ones. And we haven't even touched on the romantic subplots or the fortune-telling aspects.

Can all these disparate elements possibly come together to form a focused, cohesive game? We'll find out in February, when Marvelous USA and XSEED are set to ship what will surely be one of the most original DS games of the new year. —CASEY L.

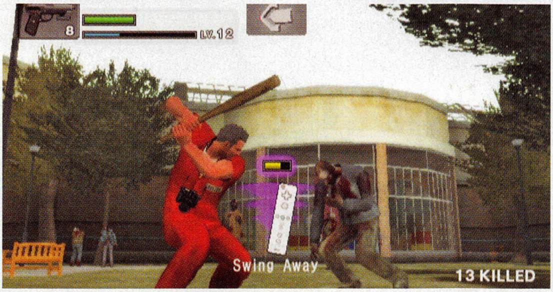
ヒース
よお！
HP
LV 1
SOUND
WINDOW
SAVE/LOAD





[Above] This guy's fashion sense is definitely *not* worth saving.

[Below] If Frank survives the zombie apocalypse, maybe he can bat cleanup for the Colorado Rockies.



Shopping Maul

> DEAD RISING: CHOP TILL YOU DROP

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2009**

For better or for worse, the Wii version of Dead Rising offers a fundamentally different experience from its Xbox 360 predecessor. Granted, the overall structure of the game remains the same—as freelance photojournalist Frank West, you run around a mall killing zombies while trying to get the scoop on why the dead have suddenly risen. But a number of significant structural and gameplay changes drastically alter Dead Rising's identity. On the one hand, many of the annoyances some players identified in the original game are gone. There are no more time limits, you're not restricted to a single save file, and since your attacks no longer hurt survivors, you don't have to worry about accidentally killing them during one of the game's frequent escort missions.

On the other hand, there are far fewer items strewn throughout the mall with which to bludgeon zombies, and you can now carry only one melee weapon at a time. A much greater emphasis is placed on firearms and collecting ammunition, making the whole affair feel less visceral. Perhaps the strangest difference, though, is that Frank can no longer jump. We'll see if Dead Rising still lives up to its billing as "zombie paradise action" when we review the game in a future issue. —**STEVE T.**

FAMILY PLAYTIME

ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES Sudoku Edition
9 x 9 Grids
8 x 8 Grids
6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
Sudoku Solver
Difficulty Levels
Great 2 Player Modes
Unlimited puzzles!

SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD
101 GAMES
FreeCell • Klondike • Golf
Pyramid • Yukon • Spider
...and 95 more games!
CAN YOU MASTER THEM ALL?

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
HEARTS • SPADES
CANASTA • CRIBBAGE
EUCHRE • GIN RUMMY
GO FISH • CRAZY EIGHTS
BRIDGE • POKER • BLACKJACK
15 SOLITAIRE GAMES
5 VIDEO POKER VERSIONS

ULTIMATE BRAIN GAMES
CHESS
CHECKERS
MAHJONG
BACKGAMMON
DOMINOES
SINK THE SHIPS
FOUR-IN-A-ROW
REVERSI
FACE CREATOR

ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES
1001 PUZZLES!
CROSSWORDS
KRISS-KROSS
NUMBER JIG
WORDSEARCH
BACKWORDS
CODEBREAKERS
CRYPTICS
and MANY MORE!

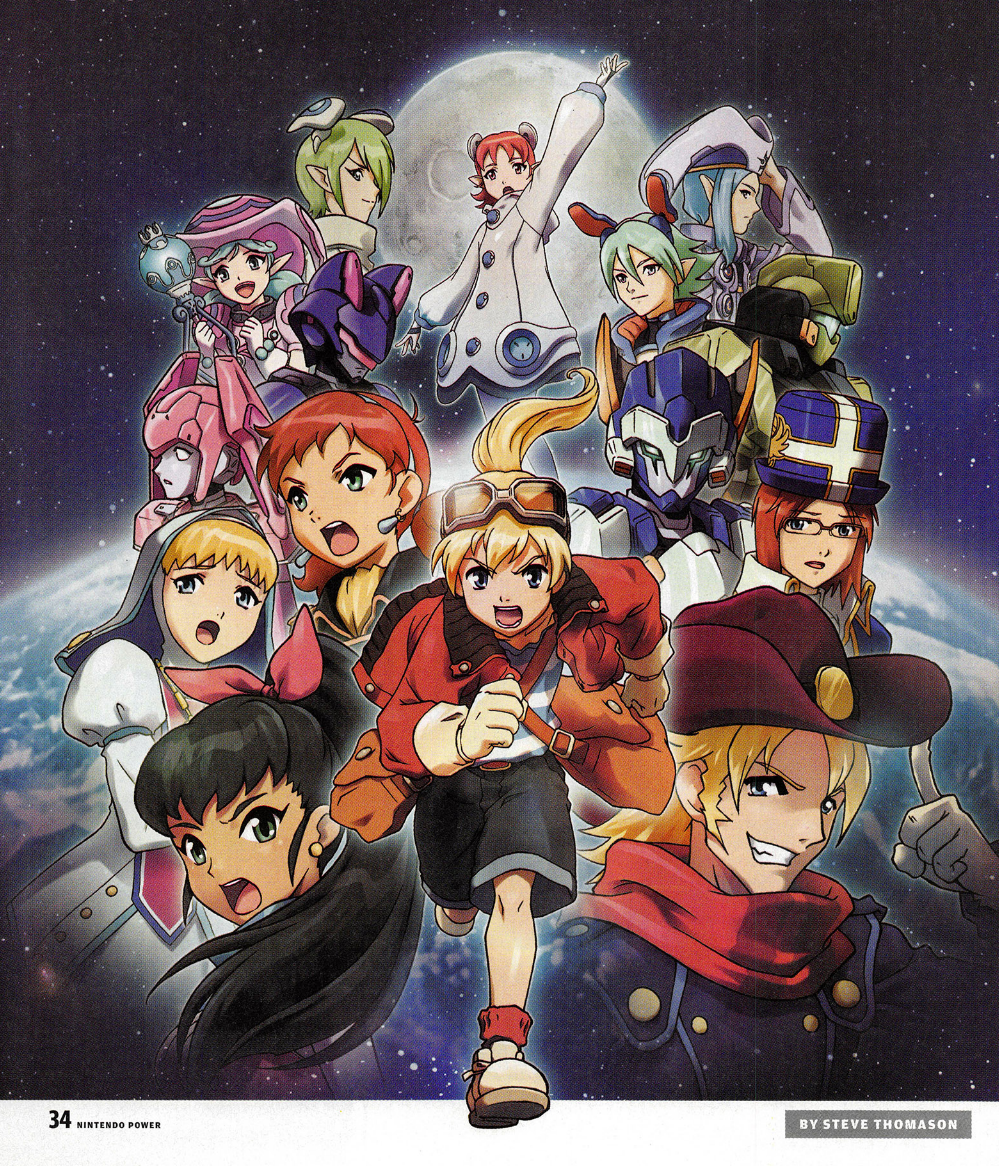
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

AVAILABLE AT
BEST BUY
GameStop
amazon.com
TOYS R US

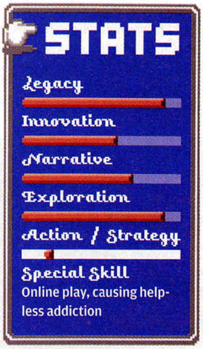
TELEGAMES®
Web site: www.telegames.com

A NEW FRONTIER

Sega brings online role-playing to the DS with **Phantasy Star Ø**, the latest installment in its pioneering space opus.



BY STEVE THOMASON



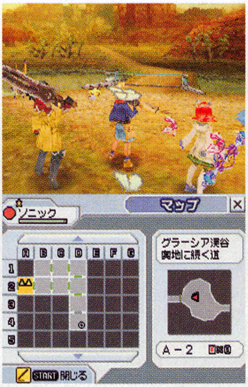
Special Skill
Online play, causing helpless addiction

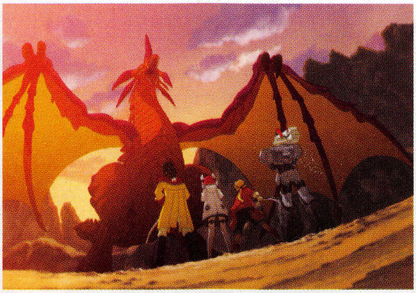
Playing the original Phantasy Star Online on Sega's Dreamcast eight years ago is one of my all-time favorite video game experiences. Exploring the exotic locales of planet Ragol three buddies, battling monsters in real time and completing quests to earn loot was like a revelation. Because for the first time ever, my fellow travelers weren't sitting in my living room with each of our characters relegated to a quarter of the screen. They were sitting in their own living rooms around the country. Or around the world. Just as we were treading new territory across Ragol, it felt like we were doing the same in the realm of gaming.

Sure, titles like Diablo II were providing similar discoveries on expensive PCs, but nothing else on a dedicated game console even came close. Now Sega intends to carry on that legacy with Phantasy Star Ø for DS, the most ambitious, compelling, and robust online offering on the handheld to date. And though the series has persisted in various forms over the years, this installment carries the added significance of being the true spiritual successor to the original Phantasy Star Online. So, PSO vets, prepare to renew your addiction (and take it on the go). Everyone else, I invite you to join us on this exciting new excursion.

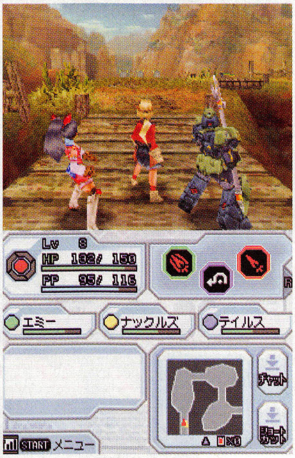
JOIN THE PARTY

Though Phantasy Star Ø also includes a fully realized single-player campaign (more on that later), the lead story undoubtedly remains its multiplayer modes. Up to four people can assemble a party via local wireless or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection and traverse the game's impressive 3-D world together. Better still, online play is entirely free (assuming you have a wireless Internet connection) and there are no territorial restrictions—you'll be able to play with folks from Japan, Europe, and everywhere in between. Like its





Dragons *and* robots? Yes, Phantasy Star is awesome.


Lv 8
HP 132/ 150
PP 95/ 116
R
エミー
ナックルズ
テイルス
チャット
ショートカット
START メニュー

predecessor, PSØ is an action-RPG with a heavy emphasis on combat and the strangely irresistible allure of hunting for cool new weapons and armor. Your merry band can undertake a variety of objective-oriented quests, but the multiplayer modes have no overarching narrative, and you're always free to just head off without any preset goals. When it comes to playing Phantasy Star with other people, it's more about the journey than the destination.

Once you've created your adventurer (see the "Building Characters" sidebar), you can hook up with specific players via friend codes or join a party randomly. You'll always begin in the game's central hub of Dairon City, where you can do some shopping, check for quests, and make sure your party is ready for action. From there you'll be able to teleport to any of the game's regions, each of which is a self-contained level (meaning you can't travel from one region to another without heading back to the city). The total number of regions remains a secret, but as with Phantasy Star Online, random map variations allow for a different experience each time you visit a particular area.

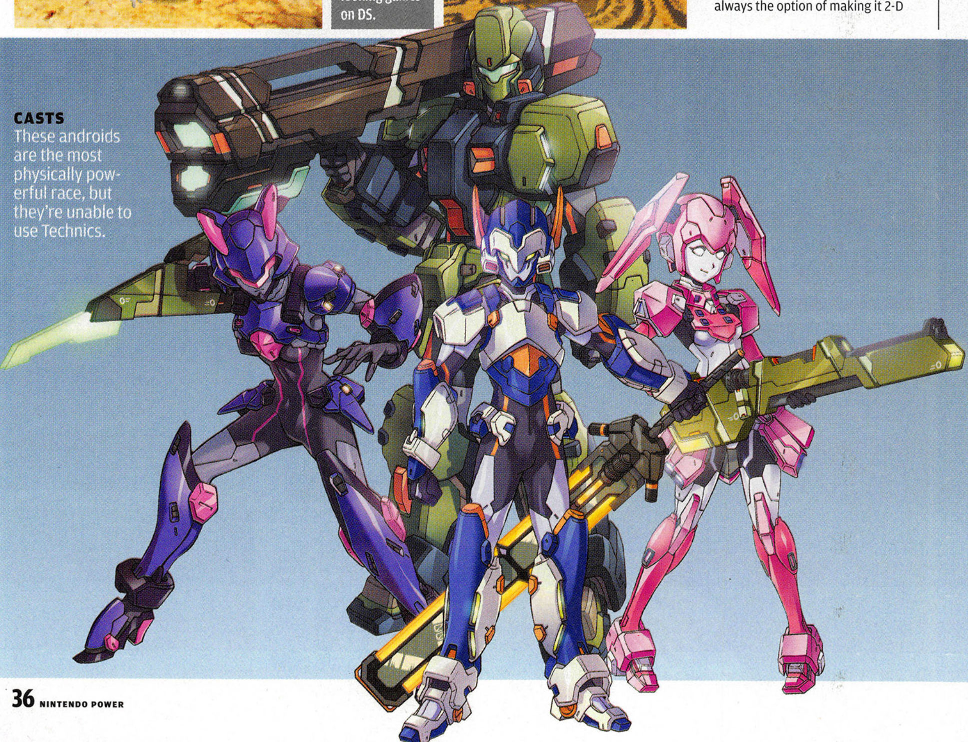
It's tough to get the full effect from still screens, but Phantasy Star Ø is one of the best-looking games on DS.

INTO THE WILD

To take Phantasy Star Ø's online mode for a spin, I teamed up with the title's producer, Satoshi Sakai. After I created my typical PSO standby—a RAcast (a Ranger Cast character) named Megatron—we set out for the Ozette Wetlands, a lush, rainy marsh that really shows off the game's remarkable graphics engine. "Obviously, in bringing the game to DS, there's always the option of making it 2-D

CASTS

These androids are the most physically powerful race, but they're unable to use Technics.



or an isometric, fake 3-D view," remarks Sakai. "But if we were to do anything other than what you see here, everybody's going to say, 'Well, that's not really Phantasy Star [Online]' So we worked really hard to make sure that we could deliver the same caliber of experience that fans expect." As a result of that hard work, PS0 maintains a solid frame rate at all times despite pushing some of the most sophisticated 3-D the DS has ever seen.

Of course, anywhere you travel outside of Dairon City will be crawling with all manner of dangerous wildlife, so there's not a lot of time to stand around and enjoy the scenery. Your first priority is to master Phantasy Star 0's real-time battle system. As in previous games, a customizable action palette lets you assign whichever functions you wish to the Y, B, and A Buttons. (You can also assign three secondary functions and access them by holding the R Button.) Naturally, that includes your basic attacks, which come in two flavors: light attacks do low damage but are highly accurate, while the reverse is true of heavy attacks.

The key to getting the most out of your offense is to perform combos. There's typically a slight delay between strikes, but by timing your button presses properly, you can string together up to three attacks of either type in quick succession. Furthermore, your accuracy increases with each successful hit during a combo, making it easier to land heavy attacks (by going light-light-heavy, for instance). Elegant in its simplicity, this combo system gives battles a certain tempo and depth that help prevent the game from devolving into a mere button-masher.

Some characters can also cast Technics, the Phantasy Star equivalent of spells. You learn Technics by finding or purchasing special discs that come in all the expected varieties: offensive, recovery, support, etc. Each disc also has a level that represents the Technic's potency. A level-nine Foie (fire), for instance, will deal much more damage than a level-two version of the same Technic. The higher a Technic's level, however, the more Photon Points it consumes (à la magic points in other RPGs) and the higher your character's mental strength must be to use it. (Ardent fans of the series will be delighted to know that Phantasy Star Universe's misguided linkage of Technics to certain weapons has been discarded.)

Yet another option at your disposal is the ability to charge most Technics and weapon attacks by holding the corresponding button for a set amount of time. Doing so drains a considerable chunk of Photon Points, but depending on the weapon or Technic, it might inflict extra damage, cover a

Building Characters

Before setting out, you'll need to decide what kind of hero you want to be.

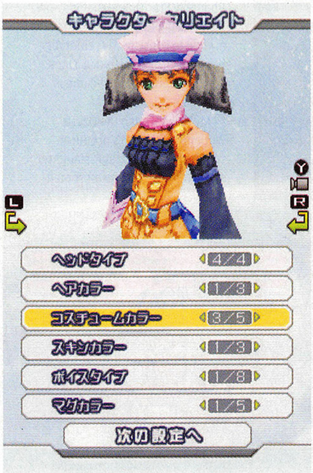
RACE There are three races to choose from. Humans are the most well-rounded, Newmen are frail elvish characters who excel at Technics (Phantasy Star's version of magic), and Casts are physically powerful androids who are immune to most status conditions but can't use Technics at all.

CLASS Next you'll pick your character's class. Hunters rely mostly on short-range weapons like Swords and Partisans, and are able to dish out and withstand the most damage. Gun-wielding Rangers are most effective when keeping their distance from the enemy. Forces are physically weak, but their proficiency with Technics is unmatched. Not all classes are compatible with all races, however. Humans can select any class, but Newmen are restricted to Hunters and Forces, and Casts must choose between Hunters and Rangers.

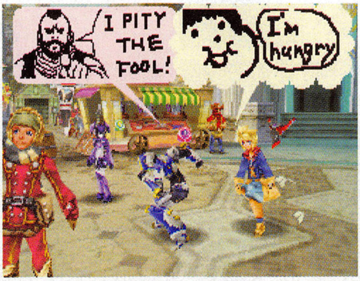
GENDER Finally, there are male and female versions of each race-class combination (with slight differences between genders), bringing the total number of character types to 14. You can also customize your protagonist's appearance, choosing from different heads, color schemes, and vocal styles (which are mostly limited to grunts and groans).

RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

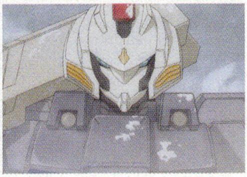
- ☑* Spiky-haired protagonist
- ☑ Earnest/clueless female lead
- ☑ Amnesia a key plot point
- ☐ Events foretold by prophecy
- ☐ Random battles
- ☐ Orphaned party members
- ☐ Airship travel
- ☑ Underage heroes
- ☐ Technology is evil



ヘッドタイプ 4/4
ヘアカラー 1/3
コスチュームカラー 3/5
スキンカラー 1/3
ボイスタイプ 1/8
マグカラー 1/5
次の設定へ



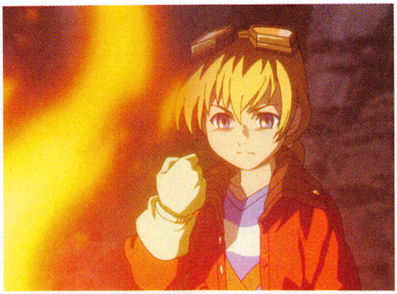
[Above] Remember kids, you should never give beggars food, but it's only polite to show them pity.



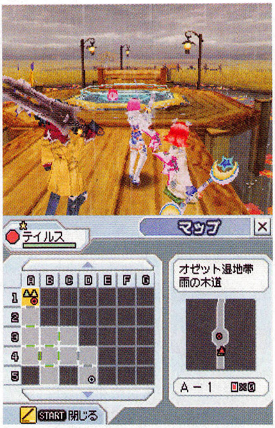
* The spikiness of the protagonist's hair is up to you!

larger area, or tack on various status effects (such as confusion or poison). Charging leaves you especially vulnerable, however, so it's always best to have someone watching your back.

And that brings us to the most important component of playing Phantasy Star 0 online: teamwork. If you and your party are to survive, it's critical that you work together, complementing each other's strengths and covering for each other's weaknesses. Watching an experienced team operate like a well-oiled machine to bring down a rampaging dragon or a giant octopus is a thing of beauty. It's tough to coordinate your efforts if you don't communicate, though. Fortunately, that's easier (and more fun) than ever thanks to one of PS0's coolest new features—visual chat. Using the stylus, you can draw any type of message you want, be it a simple "Heal me!" text missive, an arrow pointing in the direction you wish to go, or a majestic illustration of Mr. T to get your party fired up. Up to 20 messages may be saved to shortcuts so they're accessible at any time via a quick tap of the touch screen. (It should be noted that if you're playing with strangers, communication is limited to keyboard chat and premade symbols.)

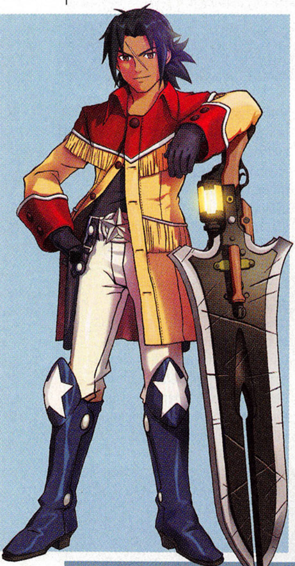


[Above] Gorgeous cutscenes are sprinkled liberally throughout Phantasy Star 0's single-player quest.



Also new to the franchise is the ability to dodge. You can assign the move to any slot in your action palette, and a simple press of the corresponding button lets you roll away from enemy attacks. Discussing the motivation behind this addition, Sakai comments, "We received feedback that the actions in Phantasy Star Universe were a bit too repetitive. Being aware of that, we tried to improve the action elements in Phantasy Star 0. This gives new users the ability to avoid attacks more easily while giving advanced Phantasy Star players a new skill to master. It also opens up different combat styles. The player can dictate the tempo when dealing with many enemies—using three-hit combos, charge attacks, and the new evasion—depending on the situation. I think this enables each player to fight in their own style." As someone who played so much Phantasy Star Online that it's now hardwired into his brain, it took me a while to consistently remember the dodge roll's existence. Once I did, though, I found it came in quite handy.

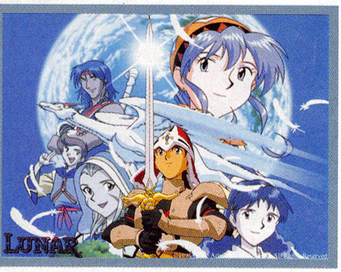
My trek through the Ozette Wetlands with PS0's producer culminated in our tragic slaughter at the tentacles of the aforemen-

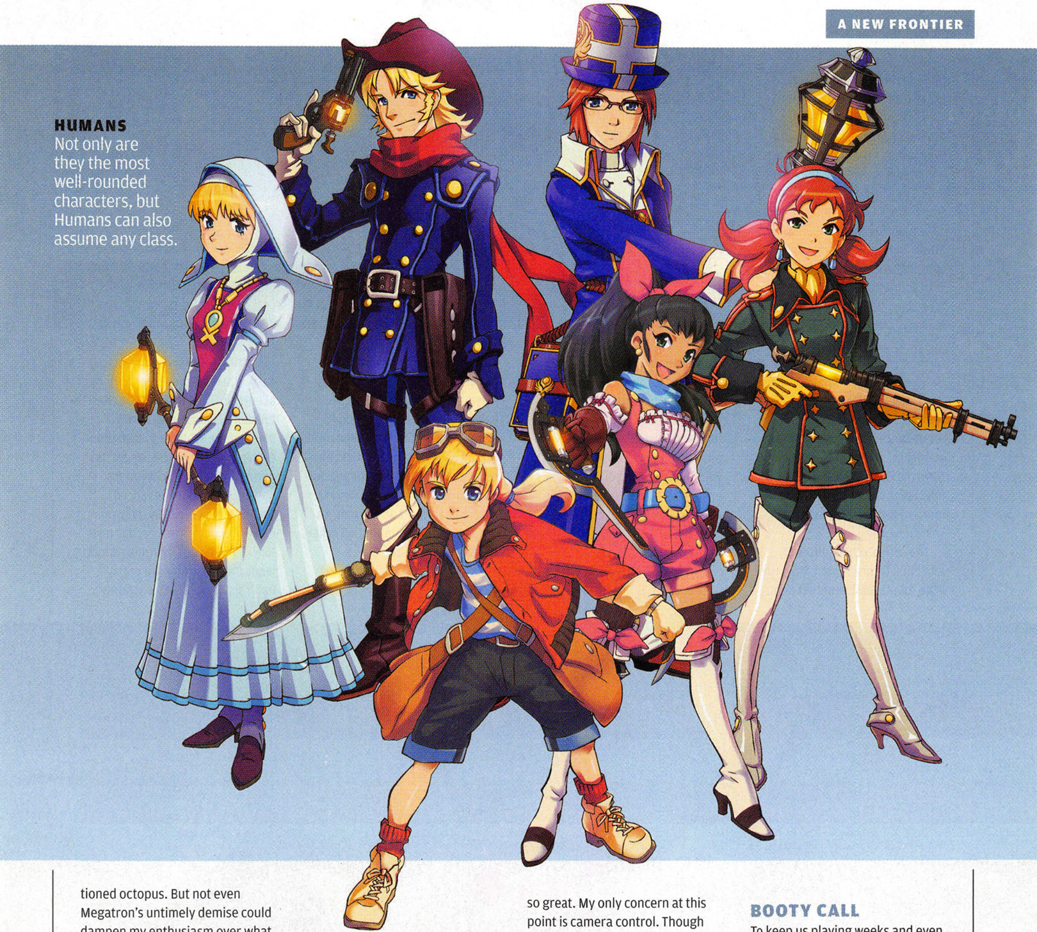


[Left] As if the fusion between sci-fi and fantasy weren't awesome enough, Kai here introduces a little Old-West flavor.

Moon Man

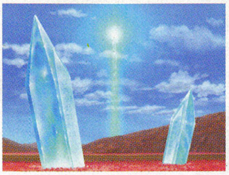
The character designs for Phantasy Star 0 are by Toshiyuki Kubooka, best known for his work on the Lunar series of RPGs and the *Giant Robo* anime series. This is Kubooka's first time contributing to a Phantasy Star title, and he was kind enough to lend his considerable talents to our exclusive cover illustration. Discussing his team's excitement over the opportunity to collaborate with Kubooka, PS0 producer Satoshi Sakai commented, "For [this game], we really wanted to appeal to a broad range of consumers, but at the same time, we wanted an art and design direction that would excite our hardcore fans. The best candidate was Mr. Kubooka; his style has brought a completely fresh look and given an uplifting feel to the characters."

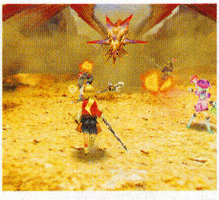




HUMANS
Not only are they the most well-rounded characters, but Humans can also assume any class.

tioned octopus. But not even Megatron's untimely demise could dampen my enthusiasm over what I'd just experienced: a full-fledged online RPG on DS that looks amazing, boasts incredible depth, and builds upon everything that made the original Phantasy Star Online so great. My only concern at this point is camera control. Though the ability to strafe by holding the L Button certainly helps, the lack of an analog stick can make it difficult to keep the camera pointed in the right direction.





[Above] Incoming! This might be a good time to try out Phantasy Star Ø's new evasion maneuver.

Nothing like Phantasy Star Ø has been attempted on DS before, and obviously Sakai is excited about breaking new ground on the handheld. "One of the greatest attributes of the DS is that so many people have it," says the producer. "It's one of the platforms that you really want to get your game onto. Bringing it to a platform that's really popular gives more people the opportunity to try it. And, of course, you'll have more people to play with."

BOOTY CALL

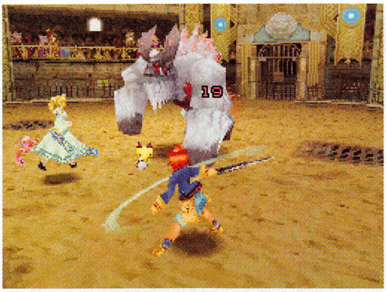
To keep us playing weeks and even months after the game's release, Sakai and his team have stuffed Phantasy Star Ø with more than 350 unique weapons, the majority of which are brand-new. As anyone who got hooked on Phantasy Star Online can tell you, searching for rare loot (and subsequently showing it off to envious teammates) quickly becomes an obsession. If you're the type of person who likes collecting stuff, this is like an IV that feeds directly into that part of your brain.

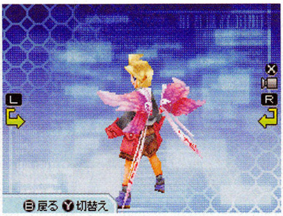
Said weapons are divided into 16 different types, including two that are wholly new inventions for the series: Shields and Gunslashes. As you might expect, Shields don't provide the greatest offense, but you can use them to defend yourself (at the cost of Photon Points) by pressing the L Button. Gunslashes serve as both swords and firearms (and yes, they do look a lot like Squall's gunblade from Final Fantasy VIII). You swing a Gunslash by simply pressing an attack button. To shoot, you need to hold the L Button in conjunction with your attack. "This weapon is recommended for advanced players," notes Sakai.

To expand things even further, any given weapon may be improved in a number of ways. You can use items called Grinders to raise a weapon's attack power, for instance, or imbue it with an elemental attribute purchased from the Custom shop. Sometimes upgrading the weapon you have is more cost-effective than buying a shiny new one.

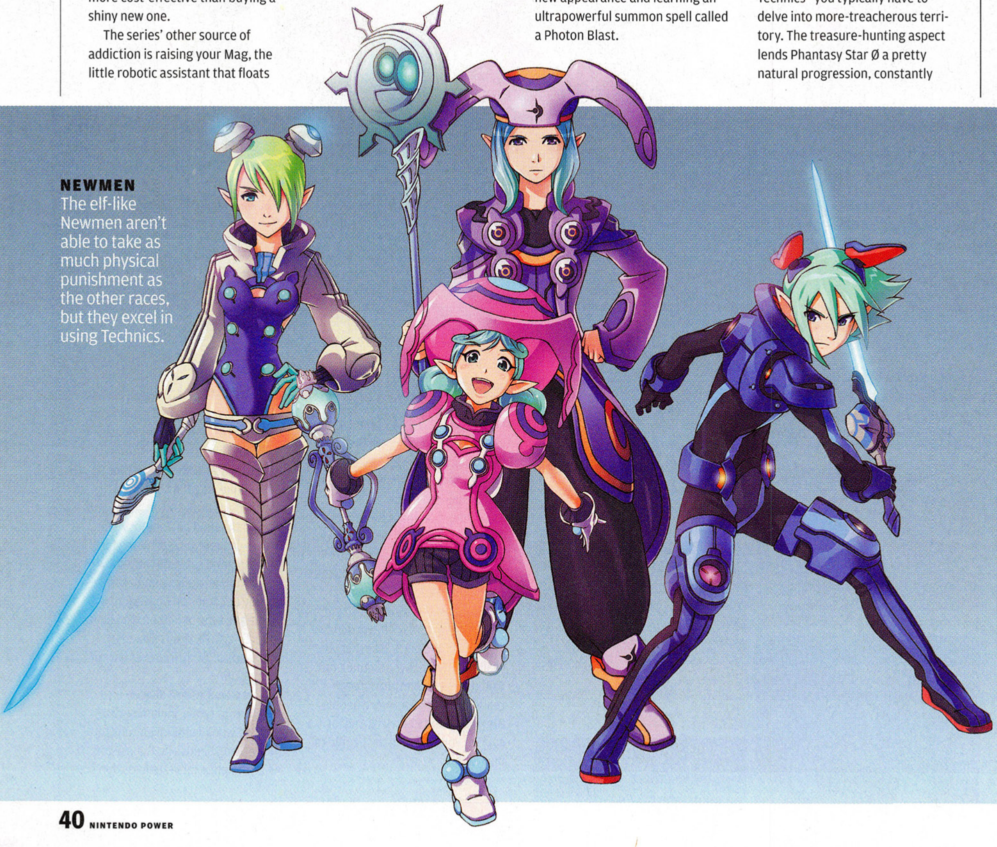
The series' other source of addiction is raising your Mag, the little robotic assistant that floats above your character's shoulder. A Mag has its own stats that affect yours, and you can give them a boost by feeding it items. (For the first time ever, that includes weapons and armor.) Every item affects your personal Mag differently, encouraging lots of (potentially costly) experimentation. When it reaches certain levels, your trusty companion will learn helpful abilities such as making you temporarily invulnerable or raising you from the dead. If you remain diligent in its feeding, your Mag can even evolve, taking on a new appearance and learning an ultrapowerful summon spell called a Photon Blast.

Getting your hands on loot is easy. Whenever you clear a room of enemies, a giant treasure chest full of it appears, and there's plenty more scattered throughout each region. Of course, to get the good stuff—be it rare weapons, powerful armor, or advanced Technics—you typically have to delve into more-treacherous territory. The treasure-hunting aspect lends Phantasy Star Ø a pretty natural progression, constantly

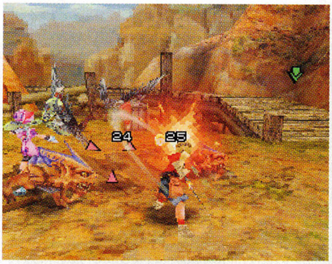


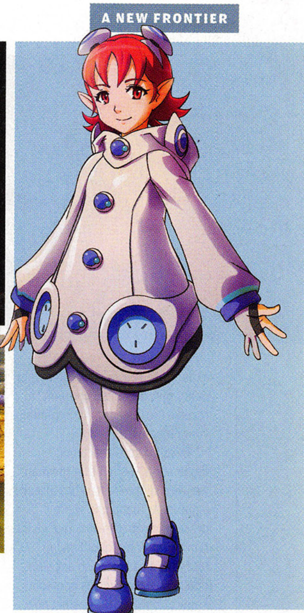


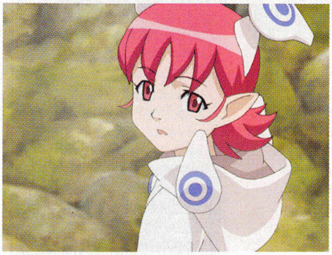
[Above] Mags can evolve into a variety of different forms. This one looks like a pair of wings, though sadly it won't allow you to fly.



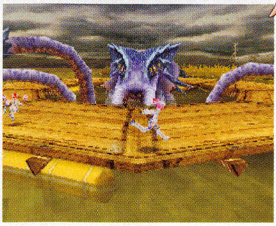
NEWMEN
The elf-like Newmen aren't able to take as much physical punishment as the other races, but they excel in using Technics.







[Right] This giant octopus is the only one of its kind, so naturally you have to exterminate it.



encouraging you to push your character in search of better goodies. (Another note of interest for PSO fans: you no longer have to take rare items to a Tekker to be identified.)

So is there any chance Sega might keep the good times rolling even longer with downloadable content or updates as they have in previous installments? "No comment," says Sakai.

FLYING SOLO

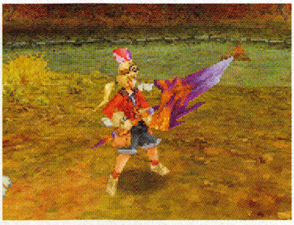
Not that Phantasy Star Ø is starving for content. As mentioned previously, the game also offers a story-driven single-player mode. It opens with a beautifully animated intro by famed anime studio Gonzo (*Blue Submarine No. 6*, *Afro Samurai*) and a theme song by up-and-coming J-pop artist Hatsune Okumura, as if to put you on notice that this half of the package isn't a mere afterthought.

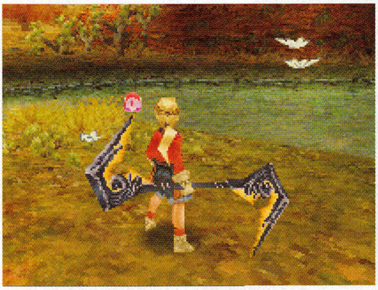
Rather than play as some predetermined hero, you'll create your own; and yes, you can use the same character in both the single-player and multiplayer modes (complete with all of his or her experience, items, etc.). I decided to stick with Megatron. As the game begins, my RAcast is discovered sleeping in the snow-capped mountains of Rioh Field by a Newman girl named Salisa. She informs me that she's from a far-away place, and that she's been sent to investigate something on this planet. Megatron seems to have lost his memories, but Salisa suspects he's from the same place she is. The two travel to Dairon City, which serves as the central hub just as it does in multiplayer mode.

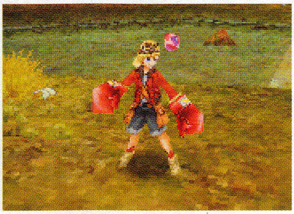
After chatting it up with some of the townsfolk, our duo is mistaken for a rescue team and tasked with returning to the mountains to search for a missing expeditionist. Before setting out, though, we need to stop at the Quest Counter to accept our assignment. Every objective in the game is presented as a quest. Main quests progress the storyline, while optional sub-quests give you the opportunity to earn extra money and/or new items. Once you've gathered the pertinent information and selected a quest, you'll head to the city's teleporter, which instantly takes you to your mission's location.

Back at Rioh Field, Salisa battles alongside me as we tackle everything from deceptively cute bunnies that whack you with their ears to bloodthirsty caribou and hulking abominable snowmen. Progressing through the level is simply a matter of clearing out an area and proceeding to the next one. A handy map displayed on the bottom screen helps you keep track of where you're going, and there's ample occasion to stray from the main path in search of loot. You'll also come across helpful interactive elements such as pressure-sensitive panels that activate automated gun turrets. Should things prove too difficult, however, you can retire a quest at any time and return to the city. You'll retain all of the items and

Here are a few examples of rare weapons new to Phantasy Star Ø. We're particularly fond of the boxing gloves.







experience you've acquired to that point, but, of course, you won't receive the reward for completing your objective.

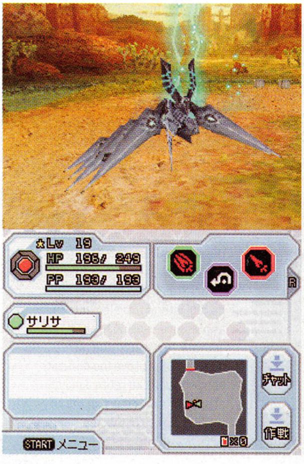
As Salisa and I reach our destination, we find that the man we were sent to rescue has already expired. At that point, we're presented with the option of giving him a proper burial or leaving him where he lies. Such decisions don't seem to have any gameplay implications, but they affect how other members of your party respond to you. Going against his namesake's better nature, I elect to have Megatron bury the poor sap, which the kind-hearted Salisa finds admirable.

After that we run into Kai, a member of the Hunter's Guild dressed a little bit like an old-west cowboy. Offering to lend us a hand, Kai joins the party and accompanies us back to Dairon City. According to Sakai, you'll have up to three AI-controlled companions throughout the adventure.

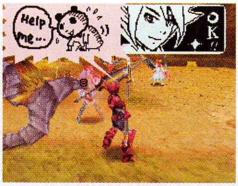
Intriguingly, the way the story unfolds is a bit different depending on which race you play. If you choose a Human rather than a Cast, for instance, you'll begin the game in Dairon City under Kai's apprenticeship. The overall story arc moves in the same direction for all races, but distinctions in party members and dialogue continue through the adventure.

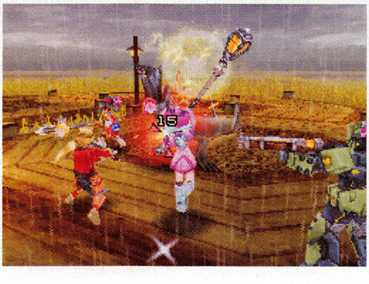
The emphasis on narrative is a radical departure from Phantasy Star Online's paper-thin plot. "The story-telling approach used in PSO had some advantages, but we felt it was more important to tell the story clearly for the audience to understand the [game's] world better," explains Sakai. Asked how the story ties into previous Phantasy Star titles, the producer responds, "We don't really consider it a sequel. This game has its own stand-alone story." But when pressed on whether Phantasy Star 0 takes place in the same universe and whether there are any narrative connections whatsoever, Sakai plays coy. "It's a secret," he says with a laugh.

We anxiously await the chance to uncover all of Phantasy Star 0's secrets when the game lands in North America this fall. For anyone planning to join us, if you see a RAcast named Megatron, be sure to keep him healed.



[Left] Mags may be diminutive in stature, but when they unleash a Photo Blast, they can dish out big-time pain!





THE STORY THUS FAR

Long before it went online, Phantasy Star was a pioneer of the traditional console RPG. The original game appeared on Sega's 8-bit Master System and was the first RPG to break out of the Dragon Quest/Dungeons & Dragons mold of generic Arthurian fantasy by introducing sci-fi elements. Among its many other accomplishments were the inclusion of characters with actual personalities, the introduction of event scenes, and the presentation of pseudo-3-D dungeons that were a technical marvel at the time. The lead designer for the title was Rieko Kodama, who also worked on Phantasy Star II and helmed Phantasy Star IV: The End of the Millennium, widely considered two of the greatest RPGs of all time. (She had nothing to do with the series' lackluster third installment.) The programmer for the original game was none other than Yuji Naka, cocreator of Sonic the Hedgehog and former head of Sonic Team.

In 2001 the series was reinvented as an online action-RPG for the underappreciated Sega Dreamcast. Living up to its heritage, Phantasy Star Online was another groundbreaking experience, letting players from around the globe team up on a wildly addictive journey. A number of follow-ups have hit various platforms over the years, but the most recent, Phantasy Star Universe, was met with lukewarm response thanks to some questionable design choices. Fortunately, Phantasy Star 0 is much closer to the original Phantasy Star Online than to PSU.

"It's been a while since the Phantasy Star Online team has gotten together and really thrown their weight into something," says PS0 producer Satoshi Sakai. "We've put a lot of effort into Phantasy Star 0 and tried to build something that's really cool and has a lot of new depth. This is the kind of RPG that only our team can make on the DS. This is something you really can't find in any other DS game."

Don't Relive the '80s without a Fight.

RetroGame CHALLENGE

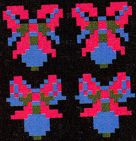
You find yourself back in the 1980's, trapped in time by the evil **Game Master Arino**. Bummer, dude.

To escape you must defeat his retro game challenges - bodacious bundles of 8-bit gaming joy. Your life is on the line, so you better show some old-school skills.

Because **no one** wants to see leg warmers again.

An awesome assortment of games. Space shooters, racing, even epic RPG action!

Beat each of the fast-paced retro game challenges to unlock the full game for free play!



Get help from in-game magazines, filled with cheat codes and fun gaming history!

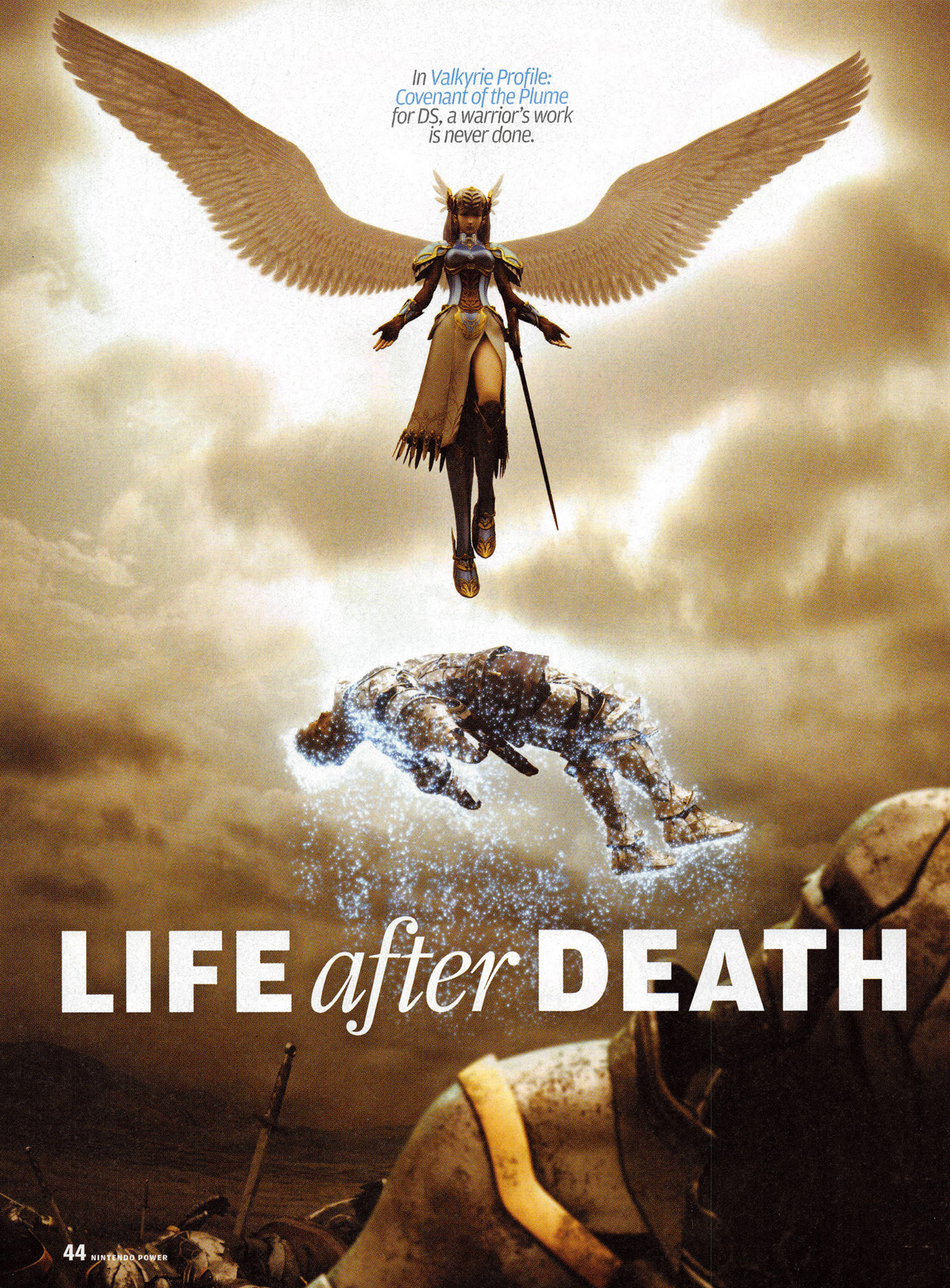
XSEED GAMES JKS
www.xseedgames.com

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Alcohol Reference
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Language

NINTENDO DS™

www.retrogamechallenge.com

© FUJI TELEVISION. © 2008 NBGI. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.
The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association



In Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume for DS, a warrior's work is never done.

LIFE *after* DEATH

The Norse were traditionally a grim, fatalistic bunch. Northern Europe was a pretty rough place in the Dark Ages, when the Vikings sailed out of their homes in Scandinavia to raid up and down the coasts of England and France. That bred a mentality in which the best way to do something useful with your life was to get yourself killed in some really spectacular way.

In the Norse way of looking at things, you didn't get to heaven by loving your neighbor and doing good to your fellow man. Nice guys got a one-way ticket to Niflheim, the icy-cold dominion of the death goddess Hel. To a Viking, heaven was for heroes. If you died standing up with your eyes open, preferably with your sword in the guts of a hated enemy, the Valkyries would come for you and carry your spirit away to Valhalla to spend eternity living it up with the armies of the gods.

That's the myth underpinning the Valkyrie Profile series, coming to the DS in March with Covenant of the Plume. On the PlayStation and PS2, tri-Ace's RPGs chronicled the adventures of a single Valkyrie as she mustered a party of dead warriors' souls. Covenant takes the series in a surprisingly different direction, though. It's a strategy-RPG, with a much bigger emphasis on combat than before. And it's not just about the Valkyrie anymore.

CASUALTIES *of* WAR

As Covenant's story begins, the Valkyrie is not necessarily loved by all who know of her. After all, a dying soldier leaves behind a living family—he may be in Valhalla now, but that's cold comfort to his surviving wife and children. Wylfred, a young man left fatherless by war, eventually works up enough resentment and rage to set himself on a campaign of revenge. In his mind, the Valkyrie killed his father. In turn, he's going to kill the Valkyrie.

Unluckily for Wylfred, he may have accidentally tripped over the power to do just that. Down in Niflheim, Hel has her own grudge against the Valkyrie, and she has a deal for a young man too blinded by anger to think much about the consequences. That's the "Covenant" of the title—Wylfred receives the strength to bring about his revenge, and Hel...well, you'll gradually find out exactly what's in it for her.

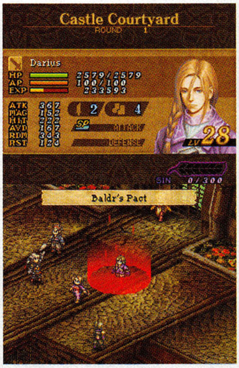
The consequences of Wylfred's decision play out through the course of the battles in Covenant of the Plume. Hel wants blood, and preferably the blood of his closest friends. You, the player, are going to have to get it for her.

ORDER *of* BATTLE

The original Valkyrie Profile had an almost-realtime combat system. The two sides stood opposite each other and took turns attacking, à la Final Fantasy, but when the good guys got their chance to start swinging, the player was able to control exactly when each character attacked, in real time. Each member of the party—four in all—was mapped to a face button. Tapping each button triggered the corresponding character, and if you timed your attacks just right, you could deal a lot of extra damage.

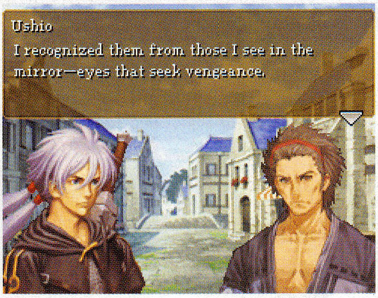
Say a monster is vulnerable to fire magic but otherwise has an unbreakable defense. If a spellcaster attacks first with a magical firestorm, she can break down the target's defense and let the rest of the party rush in to take him out.

That system forms the core of the strategy gameplay in

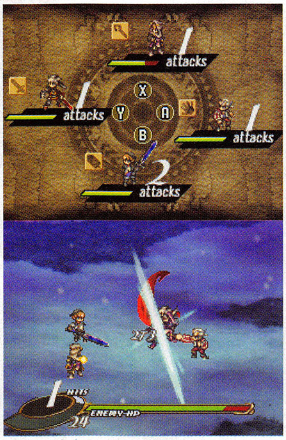


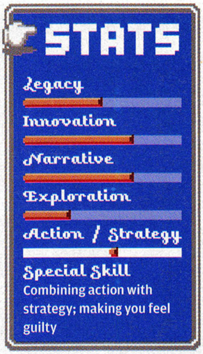
Chapter III
36225
7-03-40
Tavern
Lore
Exit

[Below] In the Valkyrie's world, there are plenty of grudges to go around.


Ushio

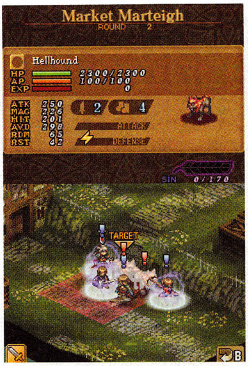
I recognized them from those I see in the mirror—eyes that seek vengeance.

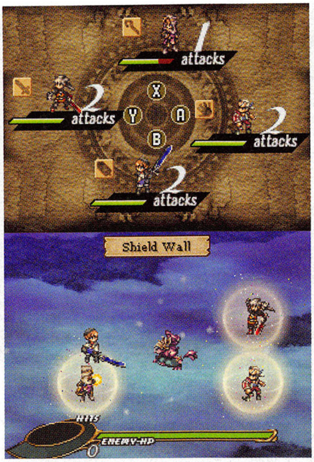




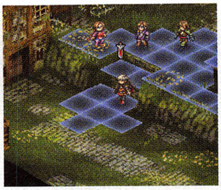
Special Skill
Combining action with strategy; making you feel guilty

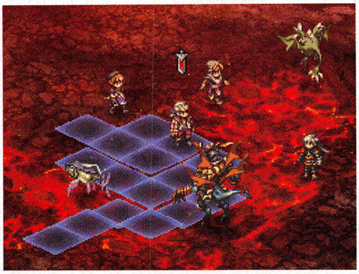
BY DAVID SMITH


Market Marteigh
ROUND 2
Hellhound
HP 2300/2300
AP 100/100
EXP 0
ATK 250
MAG 226
HIT 201
AVD 298
RDM 65
RST 42
2
4
ATTACK
DEFENSE
SIN 0/170
TARGET
B


1 attacks
2 attacks
2 attacks
2 attacks
X
Y
A
B
Shield Wall
HITS
0
ENEMY-HP

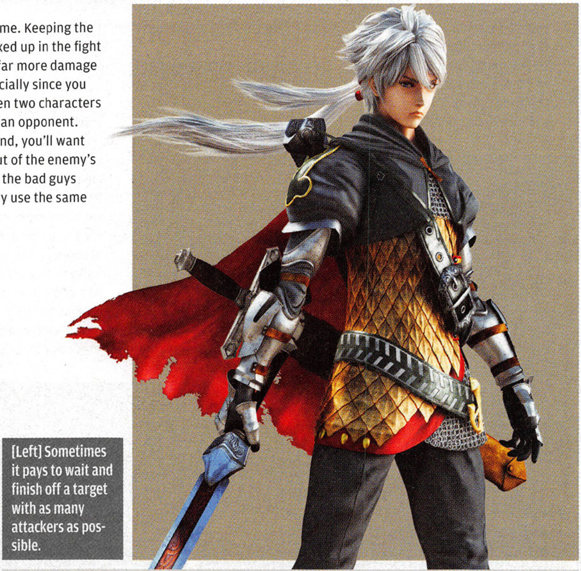
[Left] Surrounding an enemy from all four sides means extra damage *and* extra loot. [Below] The 3-D battlefield makes seizing the high ground especially useful.

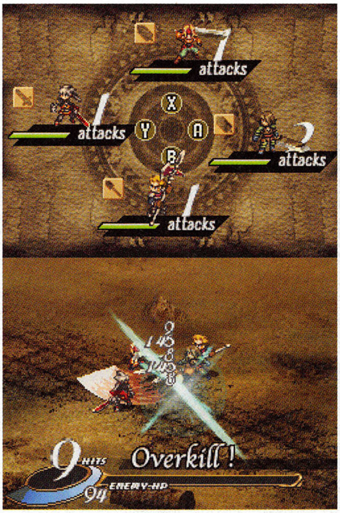




Covenant of the Plume. When characters deploy and move around the battlefield, it looks and plays just like the grid-based 3-D stages in any number of other strategy-RPGs. When they attack, though, every character who can fight in a given action becomes a member of an ad-hoc "party" that fights just like the parties in Valkyrie Profiles past.

Each character gets one chance per turn to *initiate* an attack, but they can *participate* in every other character's attacks so long as they happen to be in range of the target. That makes smart maneuvering even more important than it usually is in a strategy game. Keeping the entire party mixed up in the fight means dealing far more damage each turn, especially since you get a bonus when two characters flank or skewer an opponent. On the other hand, you'll want to keep them out of the enemy's sights, because the bad guys can just as easily use the same tactics on you.

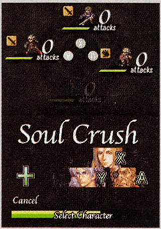


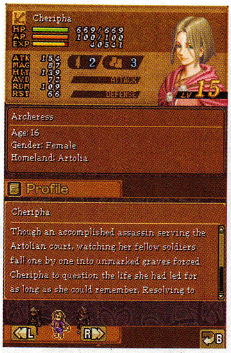

7 attacks
1 attacks
2 attacks
1 attacks
X
Y
A
B
9 HITS
Overkill!
94
ENEMY-HP

[Left] Sometimes it pays to wait and finish off a target with as many attackers as possible.

Crushing Blow

The Hits gauge at the bottom of the combat interface counts how many strikes the party lands in a single round of piling on the bad guys. Part of the reason you want to attack with as many characters as possible is to max out that gauge—when it fills up, one of the attackers can let loose a shattering Soul Crush attack. Even better, if that Soul Crush fills up the Hits gauge again, another attacker can launch a Soul Crush of their own.


0 attacks
0 attacks
0 attacks
0 attacks
Soul Crush
X
Y
A
Cancel
Select Character



Cheripha
HP 669/669
AP 100/100
EXP 40541
ATK 154
MAG 87
HIT 139
AVD 72
RDM 109
RST 66
LV 15

Archeress
Age: 16
Gender: Female
Homeland: Artolia

Profile

Cheripha

Though an accomplished assassin serving the Artolian court, watching her fellow soldiers fall one by one into unmarked graves forced Cheripha to question the life she had led for as long as she could remember. Resolving to

[Left] Meet one of your very first allies, and perhaps one of your very first victims.

Overture to the Destiny

Like nearly everything tri-Ace has ever produced, Covenant of the Plume features music by Motoi Sakuraba, the prolific composer who's also famous for providing the soundtracks to most of Namco Bandai's Tales RPGs. Some of Covenant's music is original to this game, but if you've played the other Valkyrie Profile titles, you'll likely pick up on some remixes and rearranged versions of familiar tunes. The battle theme builds on a hook used in all three games in the series, and the opening movie plays alongside a lovely new version of "Epic Poem to Sacred Death," the theme from the original Valkyrie Profile.

DEATH *be* NOT PRETTY

So far, so sane, but since combat is so much more central to Covenant than it was to its predecessors, it isn't quite so simple as knocking down every opponent. To begin with, each battle has a Sin quota. By Overkilling his opponents—dealing out far more damage than it takes to simply bring them down—Wylfred delivers Hel the blood and brutality she requires.

Meanwhile, like any other RPG, Covenant introduces characters who join forces with Wylfred over the course of his quest. They all have their own stories and their reasons for fighting beside him, but they may not survive long enough to reveal every one of their secrets.

Wylfred may grow to respect some of these people as allies, and might even consider them close friends. Hel views them only as expendable assets, though, and she'll be very pleased if Wylfred comes around to her point of view. By activating the "plume" that represents his pact with Hel, Wylfred can supercharge the abilities of a party member—who, after briefly gaining tremendously powerful new abilities, will die at the end of the battle.

The effect feels a little like the "ADAM" system in BioShock. You have the chance to reach out and grab a substantial advantage if you're willing to do something violent and cruel in the process. It says something for the dialogue and character develop-

RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

☐ Spiky-haired protagonist
☐ Earnest/clueless female lead
☐ Amnesia a key plot point
☐ Events foretold by prophecy
☐ Random battles
☑ Orphaned party members
☐ Airship travel
☐ Underage heroes
☐ Technology is evil

ment in Covenant that it hurts to do some of the things Wylfred's expected to do.

MAD, MAD WORLD

Covenant doesn't have a traditional overworld to explore, nor dungeons to wander through and puzzles to solve inside them. This is mainly a game about combat—killing and dying, if not always in that order. There's a lot of dialogue during and in between each battle, though, and it gradually fills in a detailed picture of the game world, which matches well with Kou and You Yoshinari's detailed character artwork.

Most of the characters in the North American version of the game speak in elaborate, almost lyrical old-fashioned English. This represents a tricky line for the translators and editors to walk—a little inconsistency, and the script would wind up sounding silly. Covenant keeps its balance pretty well, though. The dialogue gives the world and the characters some extra flavor, but it's not too hard to wrap your head around.

What may be harder to take as the game goes on are the story's darkness and the ruthless gameplay that grows out of it. Valkyrie Profile certainly has its roots in a harsh mythology, but that side of its inspiration has never come out in quite the way it does in Covenant of the Plume. Wylfred is very much the anti-hero, and it's hard to say whether players will sympathize with what he does and why he does it.

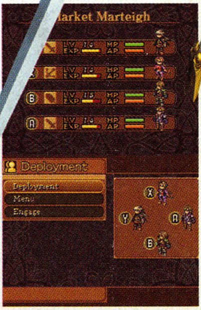
As far as RPG heroes go, though, he's a break from the norm—definitely not another fresh-faced teenage do-gooder. Whether he'll stay on the side of the demons is an open question, though, and one that's worth slugging through plenty of battles to answer. The Norse weren't much for happy endings, but there's no need to be such a slave to tradition.

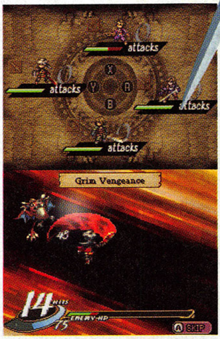
THE STORY THUS FAR

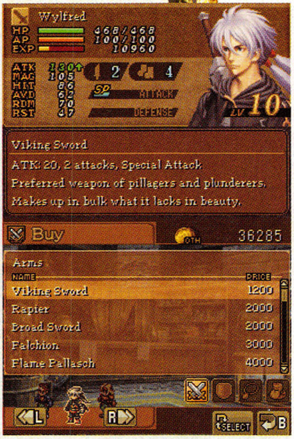
Valkyrie Profile was the third game from tri-Ace, an outfit that first made headlines as the developer of the Star Ocean series. Released for the PlayStation in 2000, the game quickly became a cult classic among RPG fans—a copy of the US version will set you back a pretty penny on eBay nowadays.

The original Valkyrie Profile was (and still is, in many ways) a unique piece of game design, with dungeons laid out like a 2-D platform game, and a fast-moving combat system that challenged players to time their attacks perfectly. That combat system survives more or less intact in Covenant of the Plume—it just has a strategy-RPG built up around it instead.

Tri-Ace also developed 2006's Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria for the PS2, which delved deeper into the past of a few key characters from the original adventure. Both Silmeria and Covenant tell more-traditional stories than the first game, though. While there was an overarching quest in the background, the original Valkyrie Profile was built around mainly on the tales of each individual character's death. It feels more like a collection of short stories than one epic novel, and there's never been another RPG quite like it.







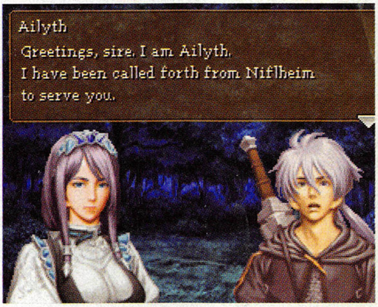
Viking Sword

ATK: 20, 2 attacks, Special Attack

Preferred weapon of pillagers and plunderers. Makes up in bulk what it lacks in beauty.

NAME	PRICE
Viking Sword	1200
Rapier	2000
Broad Sword	2000
Falchion	3000
Flame Pallasch	4000

[Right] Two screens make for a nicely informative shop menu interface.



Ailyth

Greetings, sire. I am Ailyth. I have been called forth from Niflheim to serve you.

REPORTING FROM *the* FRONT LINES *of* RPG DEVELOPMENT

For a few more details on how Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume came together, we chatted with Shunsuke Katsumata, the new game's director at Tri-Ace. He shed light on several details of Covenant's design, as well as the development team's pedigree going back to the famous Quest Corporation. The designers at Quest were some of the godfathers of the modern console strategy-RPG—they developed the Ogre Battle series for the Super NES and Nintendo 64 before many of the team's members went on to create the first Final Fantasy Tactics in 1998. Not a bad bloodline for a game like this at all.

NINTENDO POWER **Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume is very different in some ways from the last two games in the series; it's a strategy-RPG now, it's on a handheld, and unlike with Lenneth and Silmeria, the Valkyrie isn't necessarily the main character in this game. So what would you say makes this game Valkyrie Profile—what do you think are the qualities that define this series?**

SHUNSUKE KATSUMATA
Until now, action elements had taken center stage in the series, but moving to the portable we wanted to shift the focus onto the deeper, thought-stimulating elements of gameplay. Yet even though we placed emphasis on strategic elements such as battlefield positioning and exploiting skills, the roots for these can be found in Silmeria, so it didn't feel like a total departure.

Active combat systems, having players decide whether to keep or forfeit allies, and, of course, the unique game world have defined the legacy to which Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume is heir (in my mind, these elements are the heart of the Valkyrie Profile series).

If I read the company's track record right, this is the first time tri-Ace has made a strategy-RPG. Are there any particular games in that genre that the designers and developers were fans of, or that might have had an influence on the design of this one?
It was tri-Ace's first foray into developing a strategy game, and to be quite honest, we were nervous about whether or not we'd be able to pull it off. Luckily, the staff we assembled (myself included) were all avid strategy gamers, and we had the assistance of former Quest Corporation staff. We're very pleased with the results.

As for my personal influences, I've always loved Fire Emblem and Final Fantasy Tactics, and have sunk several hours into the Age of Empires series on the PC, among others. If I had to choose one favorite, however, it would have to be Tactics Ogre.

On a related note, strategy/simulation RPGs have become very popular these days, especially on handhelds like the DS. What would you say makes this game different from other popular SRPGs, like the Final Fantasy Tactics games?
I hope that popularity means more people will play our game!

What distinguishes this game from other SRPGs is the dynamic of the Destiny Plume around which the story revolves. Where in other games it has always been in players' best interests to defend the lives of their allies, Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume forces players to ponder the value of sacrifice in view of the greater goal. Needless to say, some sacrifices are avoidable, but the going will not be easy.

We've also done away with the cumbersome controls and repetitious one-on-one combat common in conventional SRPGs by implementing an innovative reinforcement system whereby multiple allies join in the fray.

The tone of the game is very grim and morbid, even compared to the other Valkyrie Profile games, and at least in the early going, Wylfred is a difficult character to sympathize with in some ways. He has his reasons, but as they player controlling him, you're expected to do some pretty violent, distasteful things. Do you worry that this might be too dark a story for some people?
We had our reservations going in, but we really wanted to recapture the gravitas of the original Valkyrie Profile and tell the tale through the eyes of a dark hero who opposed the Valkyrie, so there was no turning back. While the somber events early on may bring some players down, I think those who see the full story will ultimately find the message to be an uplifting one, so I hope they'll play it all the way through.

Related to that, the Overkill concept has been a part of the series' combat system ever since the first Valkyrie Profile, but what inspired the idea of making it such a key element of this game, with the Sin system?
Accumulating Sin was a critical theme of the plot, so we began looking for a way to tie it in with gameplay. The Overkill concept (which, frankly, has had no in-game function up until now) fit perfectly, forming an excellent bridge between play and story. The concept felt tailor-made for our dark hero, and we took full advantage of it.

I noticed that the battle theme is a remix of the one Motoi Sakuraba composed for the original Valkyrie Profile. Are there any other tracks from the first two games that show up here, or make up parts of new themes on the soundtrack?
The game features just shy of 30 tracks from the original Valkyrie Profile alongside 20 new tracks. We used the original game data for the old tracks, remixing them slightly for the DS.

We had our reasons for going in this direction, and I think players both old and new will like what they hear. Personally, I love the new battlefield and combat music in the game's first battle.

This goes back a little way, but what initially drew tri-Ace to a game based on Norse mythology way back when? Does anyone remember what first inspired the idea of a game built around the Valkyrie and her Einherjar?
Norse mythology themes involving Odin or Valkyries have long been present in Japanese RPGs, but few explored the relationship between gods and mortals. We knew the mythos was well-suited for game adaptation, and it was merely a matter of developing a solid game around it. Nowadays you see a lot more games based on Norse mythology, and so we had to go out of our way to highlight our originality.

This is more of a question about the localization than the game itself, but I thought it was interesting that the editors of the American version deliberately gave the key characters a very elaborate, anachronistic mode of speech. Why did they choose to do that, and did it take a lot of extra work to make sure the English text stayed consistent and readable in that style?

DAN INOUE (SQUARE ENIX TRANSLATOR) From the story to the music to the art design, all elements of the Valkyrie Profile game world convey a unique aesthetic both elegant and sublime. Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume's overarching themes of vengeance and redemption lend themselves to a classic style, and the author of the translation drew upon a variety of influences ranging from Norse poetry to Victorian literature in order to evoke this special aesthetic. A lot of time went into employing kennings, composing poems, analyzing meter, and other attention to detail, all which hopefully results in a truly immersive experience for players.

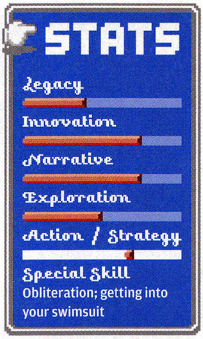
RPG SPECIAL

It's the end of the world as we know it in **Sands of Destruction** on DS.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

DESTRUCTION IS AT HAND

Not since it turned Anakin Skywalker into a whining, complaining wuss has sand been so volatile. Coarse and rough and irritating is one thing, but destructive? That's something else. Old Ani probably wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere near Sands of Destruction, the next big DS RPG from Sega and ImageEpoch.



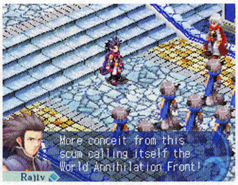
To be fair, we don't know how much blame we can actually put on the sand—it seems like the entire game world is a pretty harsh place for humans. Not only do oceans of sand cover the planet's surface (much like water does on Earth), but humans are subservient to a race of beastmen called Ferals. And not just in a "we're better than you" sort of way; Ferals actually own humans as slaves. It's sort of like if everyone on Tatooine were the property of Watto and the Hutts. But there's no easy pod race off of this world. It seems like the only escape for the humans in Sands of Destruction is to end it all, and that's where the story kicks off in this extremely promising epic.

Surprisingly, Sands of Destruction begins from the Ferals' viewpoint. Two of their top warriors—lionlike Rajiv and half-beast Naja—are seen discussing the impudence of some rebellious humans who don't know their place in the world just before their city is rocked by ear-shattering explosions. It's the work of the World Annihilation Front—an organization led by a 16-year-old girl named Morte who believes that if the world has condemned humanity to a life of subservience and slavery, then it's a world that no longer deserves to exist (thus the game's Japanese title, World Destruction). Whether that means a literal destruction of the world or an ideological destruction, Sega isn't saying, but the fact remains that Morte's playing for keeps. As you control Naja, all you can do is try to keep up with Morte (and listen to her playfully insulting banter) for a few rounds before she makes her escape, drawn away by more-important duties.

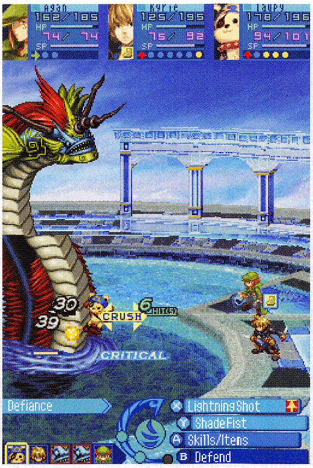
The scene then switches to a much more serene setting—a rural village where, despite being the property of Feral slave masters, humans live out their simple yet fairly peaceful lives. Among the population is a young man named Kyrie (no relation to Mr. Mister's hit '80s song); he's a good-natured fellow and a talented cook who works at his uncle's pub, and the game's first fully playable character.

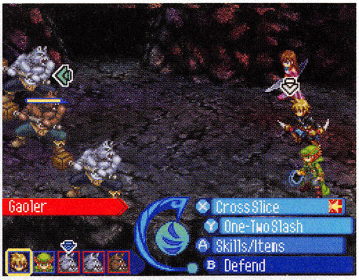
WHAT A RUSH

At his uncle's behest, Kyrie's (and your) first task is to venture into a local cave to retrieve some mushrooms, allowing you to get properly acquainted with the game's accessible yet amazingly deep battle system. Adhering to Japanese RPG tradition, battles are random-encounter turn-based affairs, but semblance to typical combat ends there. Once you've engaged an enemy, each face button is mapped to a different command: X for one type of attack,

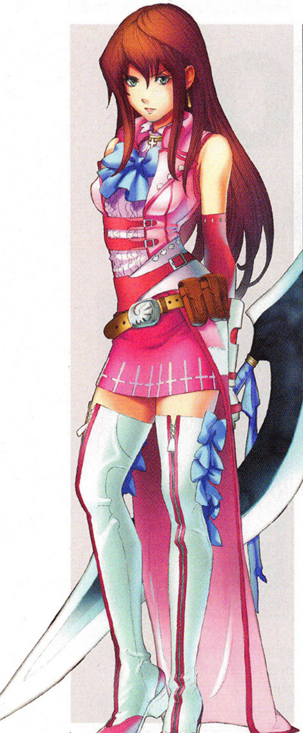


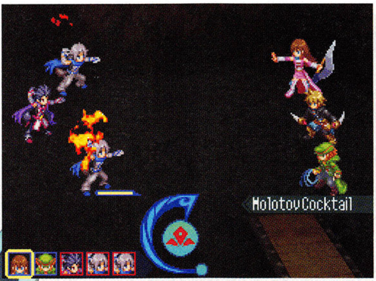
More conceit from this scum calling itself the World Annihilation Front!

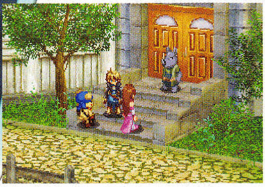




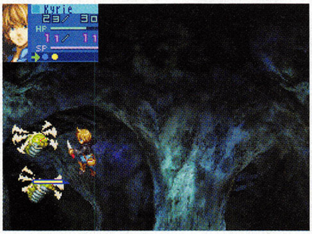
[Left] Giant dual-screen bosses are the norm. They often have multiple attack points, one of which is a weakness.







[Above] Rajiv and his men will put up a tough fight to protect the Feral way of life.



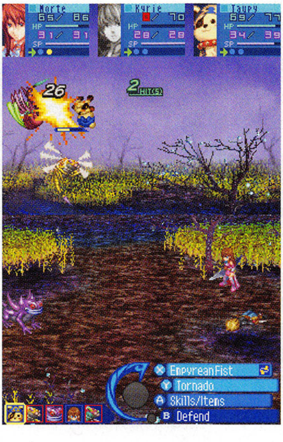
Y for a different type of attack, A for skills and items, and B for defense. (There are no touch-screen controls; ImageEpoch intentionally focused on other capabilities of the DS instead.) Attacks are grouped into two categories—rush and blow. Rush attacks unleash numerous hits at the expense of power, while blow attacks are stronger and more accurate but offer a lower combo count. Determining which attack type is better for a given enemy will help you succeed in battle, and as you gain experience, you'll be able to upgrade your attacks (which can in turn unlock new attacks that you can then assign to X or Y).

Another important factor in combat is a series of yellow orbs that appears under your characters' vital statistics. The orbs represent how many actions you can take in battle, allowing you to string together multihit combos of various attacks. If you land enough hits or luck out with a critical strike, your orb count will increase, allowing you to inflict even more damage, and if you max out your orbs, you'll be able to unleash a devastating deathblow that requires specific button inputs within a short timeframe. You can also spend your orbs to execute defensive and offensive skills; for example, Kyrie can whip up a mean mushroom salad that poisons enemies. Mario had better watch out.

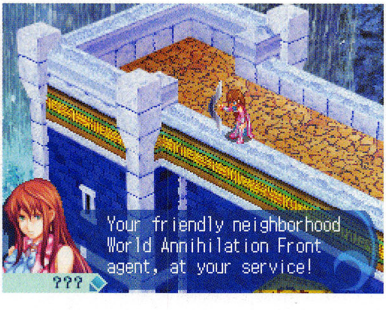
And that's just the beginning of the battle tactics you can utilize. Since the skirmishes span both screens, enemies can attack from the ground or from the air (the towering bosses usually do both), and you can retaliate in kind by using specific attacks to knock ground-based enemies into the air or slam aerial enemies into the ground, leaving them extravulnerable. There are 10 categories of standard attacks (including both ground- and air-based maneuvers), and eventually you'll be able to use multicharacter team-up attacks, à la Chrono Trigger, to really inflict punishment on your foes.

RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

- ☑ Spiky-haired protagonist
- ☐ Earnest/clueless female lead
- ☐ Amnesia a key plot point
- ☐ Events foretold by prophecy
- ☑ Random battles
- ☑ Orphaned party members
- ☐ Airship travel
- ☑ Underage heroes
- ☐ Technology is evil

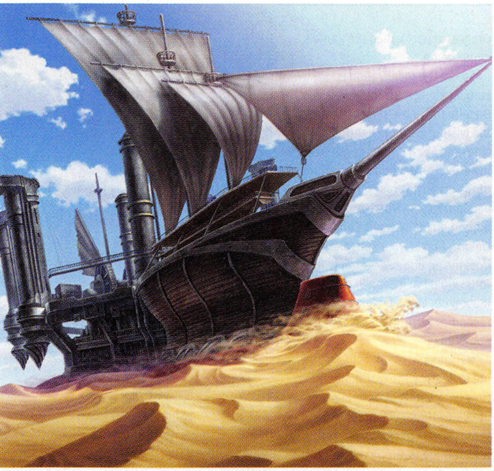


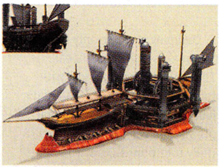
[Below] Morte may be out to annihilate the world, but at least she's being nice about it.



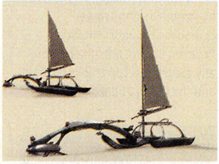
???

Your friendly neighborhood World Annihilation Front agent, at your service!





Massive sandships and small skiffs alike are used to navigate Sands of Destruction's vast deserts.



THE WORLD ENDS WITH KYRIE

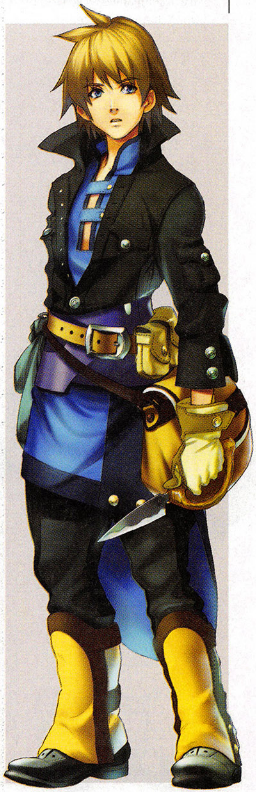
Of course, you won't have to master all of these techniques to snag a few mushrooms for your uncle. (You will have to beat up a sand whale, but they're wimpier than you might think.) Once you've completed your task, Kyrie is summoned to the Feral mayor's manor house, only to find himself quite unexpectedly placed under arrest. Although you can attempt to flee, you'll eventually be completely surrounded by enemy soldiers. Just when everything seems utterly lost, an enormous energy wells up inside Kyrie—power far beyond his control. The guards trapping him literally melt before his eyes, the Feral lord is obliterated, and the entire manor house is wiped from existence. Kyrie has no idea what this power is or where it came from, but it leaves him exhausted, terrified, and vulnerable to attack by Rajiv, who shows up to investigate the devastating disturbance. Kyrie is quickly subdued and captured.

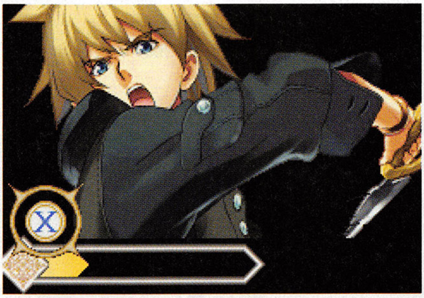
A long prison stay (or a short one, followed by a swift execution) looks like Kyrie's destiny, but it's not to be. Turning traditional RPG storytelling on its head, the girl (Morte) shows up to free the guy (Kyrie). The two make an escape from the cavernous prison—beating up Rajiv and his burly bear guards along the way—which is where the adventure really begins. Kyrie wants to know what he is and where his powers came from, and Morte wants to use Kyrie's powers to destroy the world. Your typical swords-and-sorcery tale about hopes and dreams this is not; the developers have expressed a desire to avoid traditional RPG storytelling clichés, and so far, so good.

Though Kyrie and Morte's motivations may be atypical, they have a traditionally massive journey ahead of them. They'll travel the world on gargantuan sandships, visit numerous towns, and stop by a variety of locales ranging from swamps to caves to majestic temples. They'll also team up with additional characters (you can select which three are in your active battle party), including whip-wielding mercenary Agan; 300-year-old blonde dragon-woman Lia; and Taupy, a Feral who looks like a cuddly teddy bear but is actually a stone-cold veteran bounty hunter who would kill

THE STORY THUS FAR

Sands of Destruction isn't part of a series, but its creators have been associated with some of the most notable RPGs ever made. Scenario writer Masato Kato and music director Yasunori Mitsuda were both heavily involved with Chrono Trigger and Xenogears, and up-and-coming development studio ImageEpoch has created the two Luminous Arc strategy-RPGs for Atlus. ImageEpoch team members have also worked on the highly acclaimed Chrono Cross and Xenosaga.





After you build up your orbs and input the correct button command, a short cut-scene displays Kyrie unleashing his deathblow technique.

everyone in your party if someone paid him enough. Naja, the half-beast you control in the game's introductory battle, eventually joins your crew as well.

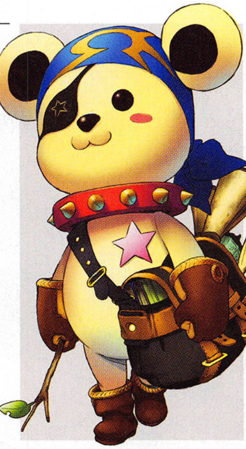
LINES IN THE SAND

One thing that separates your heroes from those of other RPGs (aside from the whole destroying-the-world thing) is their ability to learn and use various "quips." As events occur throughout your adventure, your characters will learn certain phrases that bestow various beneficial effects, such as earning extra experience points, doubling your acquired gold, boosting your defense after you get hit, or ensuring that you can escape from battle. Each character can equip four quips at once (from around 20 per individual), and, as the term suggests, quips are accompanied by voice clips when they're activated.

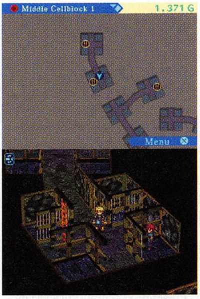
Quipping isn't the only thing that makes characters speak. The entire game is packed with fully voiced cut-scenes, and that's just the start of the exceptional production values. The visuals (fully rotatable 3-D environments with intricately animated sprite-based characters) are extremely impressive for the DS, and the soundtrack features more than 50 tracks composed by famed Chrono Trigger composer Yasunori Mitsuda's Procyon Studio; Mitsuda personally contributed 20 tracks himself, and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performed the game's main theme.

So far, the localization is coming along extremely well, too. Despite the game's dark themes, the writing is on the lighthearted side, and Sega is even considering lowering the encounter rate (one of the criticisms of the Japanese version) for the North American edition. In many ways, Sands of Destruction is what you might imagine an upper-echelon 16-bit RPG would have been like had it been developed using today's technology—and that's a very good thing.

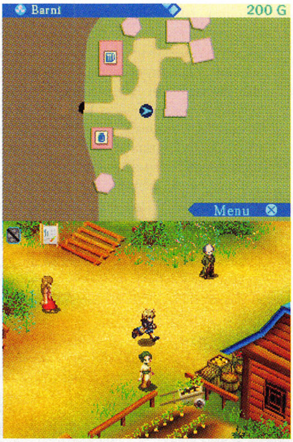
Normally we don't condone trying to destroy the world, but our time with Sands of Destruction indicates that it will provide a fantastic mix of classic concepts and new ideas, along with a unique story and stellar presentation, leaving us eagerly awaiting the game's summer 2009 release.

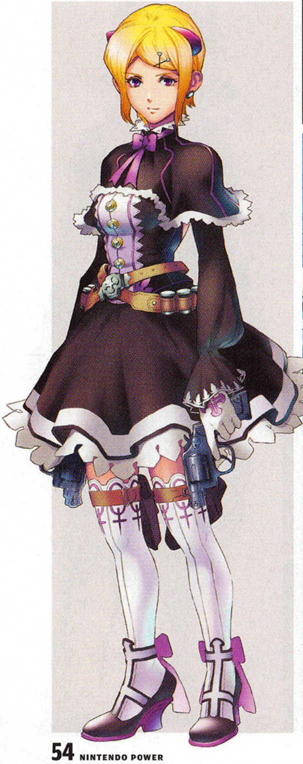


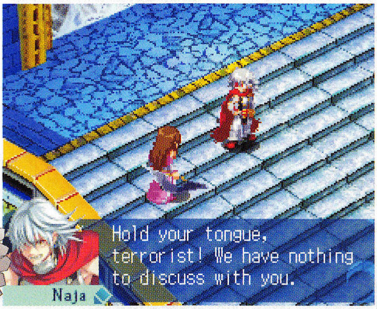
Who knows? If these were the sands that Anakin had been exposed to, maybe Darth Vader wouldn't have been such a jerk.



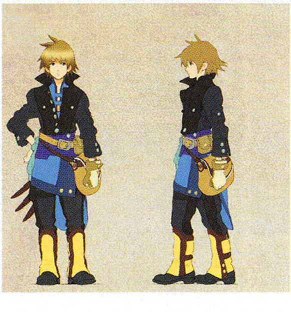
Outside of combat, the DS's upper screen acts as a map. In combat, the dual screens are used for an expanded battlefield.

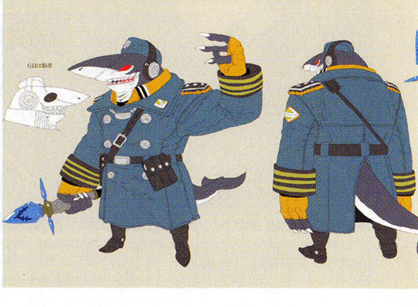






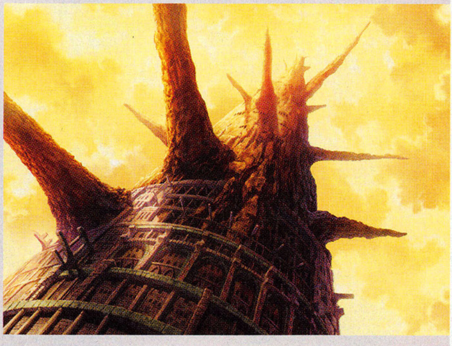
Hold your tongue, terrorist! We have nothing to discuss with you.





DESTROYER *of* WORLDS

With scenario and writing credits on games such as Chrono Trigger, Xenogears, and Final Fantasy VII, Masato Kato is one of the world's premiere RPG storytellers. While Kato constantly strives to bring something new to his projects, Sands of Destruction and its decidedly nonheroic plot might be the writer's most unique project yet. Nintendo Power recently had the chance to speak to Kato about his latest work and the origins of the game's atypical tale.



NINTENDO POWER First, how did your involvement with ImageEpoch and Sands of Destruction come about?

MASATO KATO I heard about this work through Mr. [Yasunori] Mitsuda, the sound director. He asked me like, "They would like you to write a scenario at ImageEpoch, so how is your schedule?" It was pretty simply like that.

The story seems pretty dark. What would you say are the game's themes, and what compelled you to go in this direction?

Well, I could spend an endless amount of time talking about what compelled us to go in this direction. At the most basic RPG level, [a typical story] comes down to the main character(s) of the game fighting against and trying to defeat enemies to save the world to justify their beliefs, to protect the ones they love, and to serve justice. For RPGs it seems the natural way for a game system to work—beat the enemy; otherwise it's the end of the game.

Yet I felt it would be refreshing to change the point of view a bit where "destruction of the world" is justified because of all the strong bullying the weak, judging and accusing of others—I am hoping to arrive at a completely new game.

Of course, I cannot express that straight in the game and tried to keep it somewhat cheerful and entertaining on the surface. However, I find that games with such a story direction could be more acceptable these days, as the world we live in now is becoming more chaotic and uncertain.

Similarly, playing characters who want to destroy the world is a pretty big departure from your typical hero. Can you talk a little bit about where that idea stemmed from?

Well, I don't find them that different from the characters I created in the past. [laughs] They must fight without choices and that's the sole reason left to fight. The objectives of the characters change from one to another.

What were some of your sources of inspiration for the game's world?

All news, phenomena, movies, novels, and all information I am exposed to every day in the actual world. The idea is not derived from one of these units alone; rather it's derived from the entire chaotic pool of everything, naturally or forced, depending on the situation.

What would you say are the similarities and differences compared to your past works?

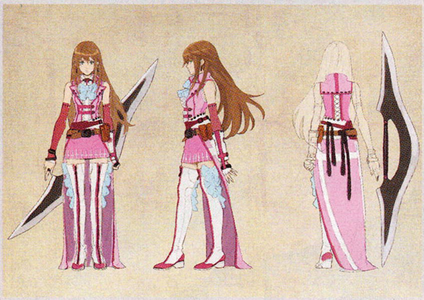
Heh, now how am I supposed to answer this question? [laughs] As for myself, I try to create something new every time, so that it's set apart from past works. So they are different, unsurprisingly, yet some parts would stay unchanged. Since I continue to explore the fun factor of the story for a game and its possibilities, I expect all of my works to share common elements at their cores.

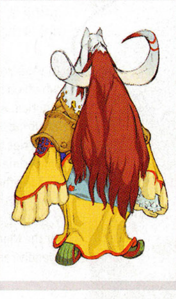
What would you say is the biggest thing that sets Sands of Destruction apart from other RPGs?

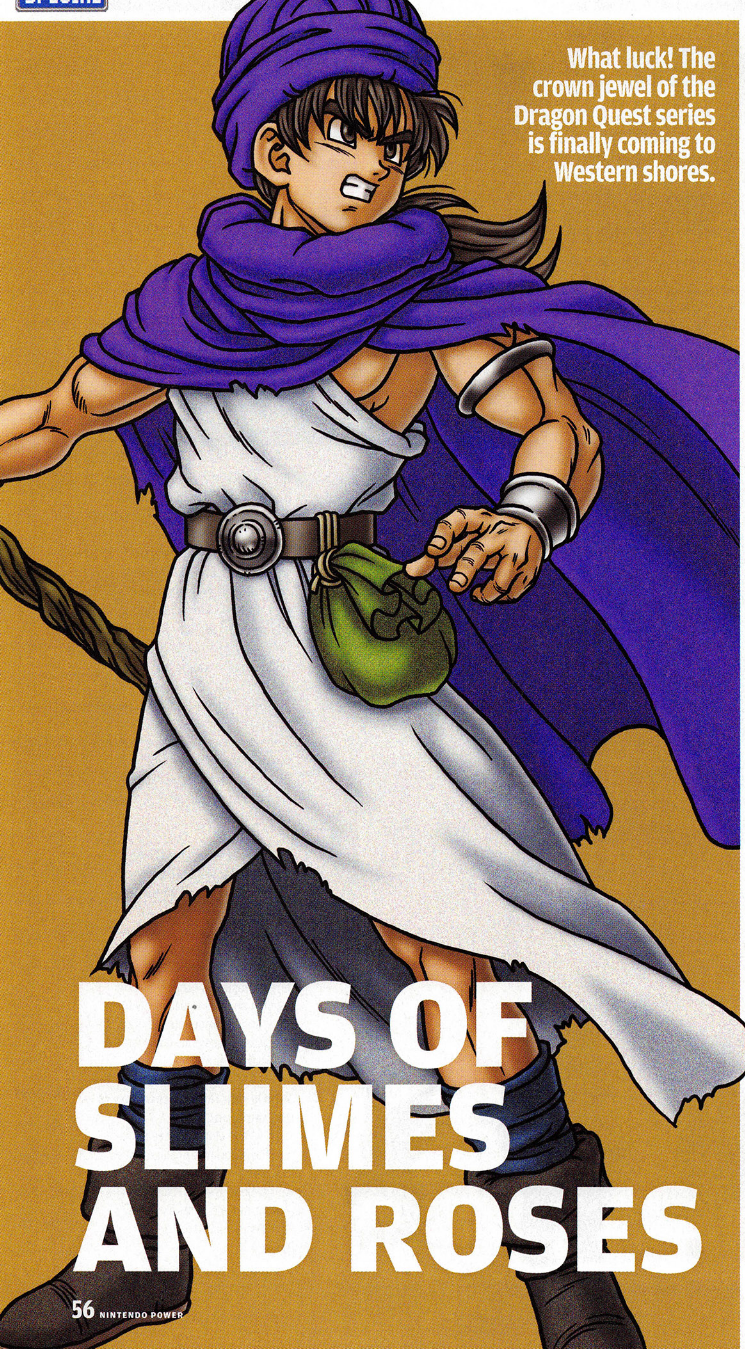
It is perhaps that the main characters are fighting against everything with the complete world as their enemy, instead of them fighting against an enormous enemy for love, justice, or beliefs. Whether that was successfully completed or not is another matter.

Who is your favorite character in the game, and why?

That will be Morte. The reasons are the amount of problems she handles alone, and her strong spirit. Nevertheless, I also like the pair of Taupy and Muffy [Taupy's girlfriend] very much.







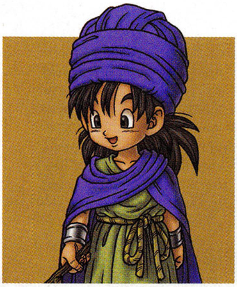
DAYS OF SLIIMES AND ROSES

What luck! The crown jewel of the Dragon Quest series is finally coming to Western shores.

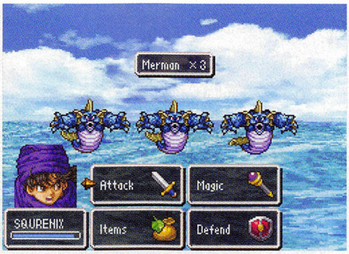
BY CASEY LOE

There are many ways to make an RPG feel *epic*. Some developers go for volume of content or depth of freedom or intricate storylines that involve huge casts and ever-expanding perils. When developing Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride back in the early '90s, series creator and scenarist Yuji Horii went a different route, expanding the series' traditional search-for-the-Chosen storyline to span three generations of a single family. "Although it would have been possible to change the character with each generation," muses Horii, "we decided to start with the hero as a child, and have the player watch him grow up and become a parent himself. We thought this method of storytelling would have the most emotional impact." The story entangles not just the ever-maturing hero, but the lives of his parents, bride, and future children, making for a powerfully moving entry in a franchise that had never attempted anything beyond lighthearted adventure. It quickly became Horii's favorite game in the series, and it holds that distinction still.

Too bad Horii's enthusiasm didn't rub off on his coworkers at Enix America, who decided to stop localizing Dragon Quest just as the series hit its creative peak. That crime is now being redressed with the three-part release of the Zenithea Trilogy (Dragon Quest IV, V, and VI), all significantly remade for the Nintendo DS. After the friendly reception Dragon Quest



[Left] A child must one day become a man, but a purple turban/cape need never go out of style.



RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

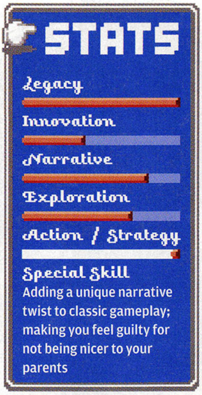
- ☐ Spiky-haired protagonist
- ☐ Earnest/clueless female lead
- ☐ Amnesia a key plot point
- ☑ Events foretold by prophecy
- ☑ Random battles
- ? Orphaned party members
- ☐ Airship travel
- ☑ Underage heroes
- ☐ Technology is evil

IV: Chapters of the Chosen received last year, Hand of the Heavenly Bride finally seems due to get the attention it so richly deserves.

A QUEST FOR THE AGES

Hand of the Heavenly Bride begins with the hero as a young boy, tagging along as his father pursues the quest his son will one day inherit. While Dad is otherwise occupied, the hero and his playmates scurry off to do a bit of questing of their own, pursuing a pair of dreamlike adventures that make for one of the most appealing opening chapters in the Dragon Quest series. But the hero's happy childhood cannot last forever, and his path to adulthood will be marked with both triumphs and tragedies. He'll take a bride and father children of his own, but he'll face some very difficult choices—and have to endure their painful consequences—as his lifelong mission continues.

Horii has a gift for brevity that is rare among his peers, and he doesn't need cut-scenes or lengthy conversations to tell an emotionally involving story. Nor does he need to pile on the pathos to make you feel something—the handful of dark and tragic moments in Dragon Quest V hit hard because of the many lighter moments that have drawn you into the quest and made you attached to its likeable cast. Dragon Quest V may lack the sophistication of more-modern titles, but few RPGs since have matched the warmth of its soul.



STATS

Legacy

Innovation

Narrative

Exploration

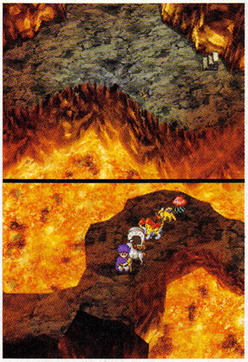
Action / Strategy

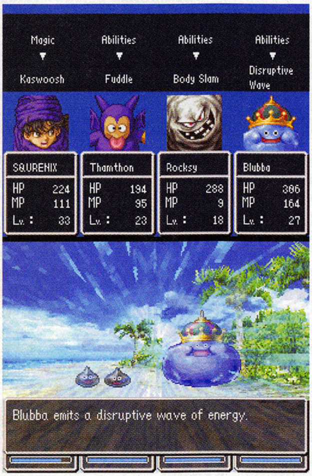
Special Skill

Adding a unique narrative twist to classic gameplay; making you feel guilty for not being nicer to your parents

I CHOOSE YOU, SLIME KNIGHT!

With the game's tight focus on a single family, Horii had to look beyond the usual cast of rogues, priests, and princesses to fill out the hero's party. He found his supporting cast in the series' traditional roster of foes, and designed a monster-recruitment system that would later serve as an inspiration for the Pokémon series. Recruiting is a simple and random process: after you defeat certain monsters, they may pledge their loyalty to the hero. Wild

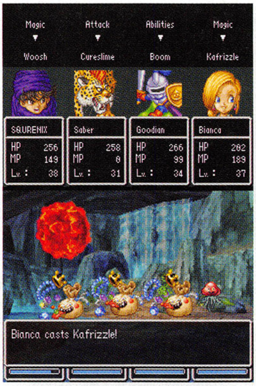




SQUREHIX	Thamthon	Rocksy	Blubba
HP 224	HP 194	HP 288	HP 386
MP 111	MP 95	MP 9	MP 164
Lv.: 33	Lv.: 23	Lv.: 18	Lv.: 27

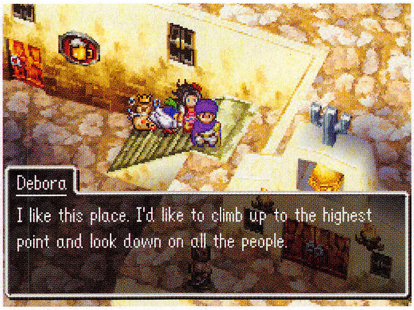
Blubba emits a disruptive wave of energy.

[Below] Whoever you choose to marry, your kids will take after their mother. Before proposing to Nera, consider how your kids will be nicknamed "slime-hair" at school.



SQURENIX	Saber	Goodian	Bianca
HP 256	HP 258	HP 266	HP 202
MP 149	MP 0	MP 99	MP 189
Lv.: 38	Lv.: 31	Lv.: 34	Lv.: 37

Bianca casts Kafrizzle!


Debora

I like this place. I'd like to climb up to the highest point and look down on all the people.

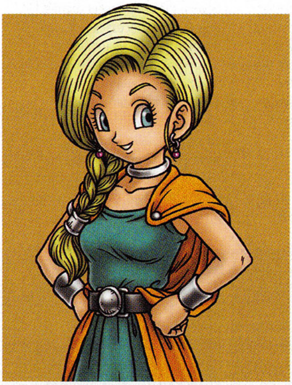
Just consider yourself lucky that Debora stops short of hawking loogies and throwing pennies. Hey, you're the one who decided to marry her!

monsters are typically only level 1, so you never really know what their ultimate potential is until you level them up and try fitting them with different equipment—who knew that Healslimes could use edged boomerangs? Who knew that Jailcats grew into such versatile spellcasters?

The monsters are well balanced level-for-level, but their preset level caps will force you to rotate out old favorites as ones with greater potential become available. Every new version of Dragon Quest V has added more monsters to recruit, and at this point there are more than 60 available. With such a generous roster to choose

THE BRIDES, HEAVENLY *and* OTHERWISE

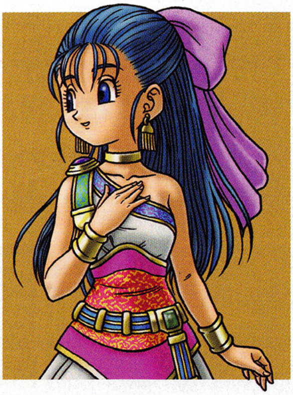
Eventually your hero will need to find a partner to—as the priest at your wedding puts it—"love and to cherish, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall be resurrected from death in the church." The DS version of Dragon Quest V offers three lovely prospects. Who will you choose?



BIANCA WHITAKER

The hero and Bianca first met as young children, and the two set off on a grand adventure while their parents were occupied with grown-up stuff. After exploring a haunted tower and saving a saberkitten from local bullies, the two parted ways for over a decade. When chance reunites them, the hero finds Bianca willing and eager to embark on a lifelong adventure with her childhood friend.

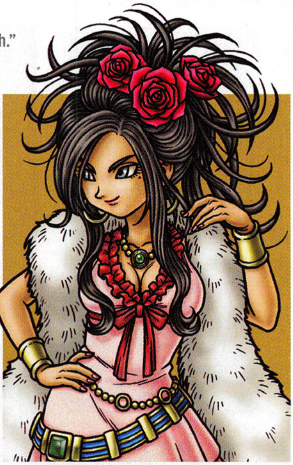
A consummate tomboy, Bianca can be a bit coarse, but makes up for her lack of refinement with her boundless enthusiasm and prowess on the battlefield. She's the highest-level of the three brides by far, but her hardscrabble upbringing hasn't provided her with any of the exclusive, high-quality equipment that the Briscoletti girls enjoy.



NERA BRISCOLETTI

Sweet, beautiful, and chaste enough to make freshly fallen snow seem smutty by comparison, Nera has everything a young man might desire from a bride—except, perhaps, a personality. As the daughter of a wealthy shipping baron, Nera is a magnet for gold-digging suitors. So protective father Roberto Briscoletti has decided to force all interested parties to risk life and limb on a pair of dangerous quests before they can win her hand in marriage.

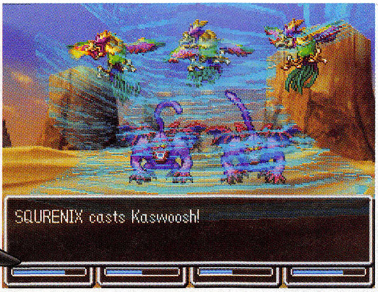
When you propose, the demure Nera confesses that all she can ever be is "a wife who relies on you for protection and shelter." But faced with the prospect of a long separation from her adventurer husband, Nera will toughen up and join the hero on his quest, growing into a respectable sorceress in the process.



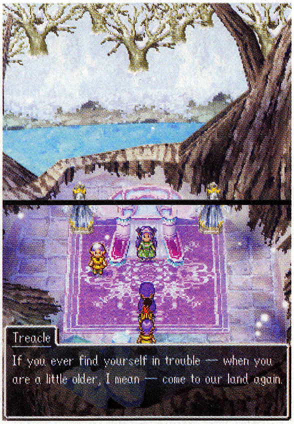
DEBORA BRISCOLETTI

It's a safe bet that the producers of Dragon Quest V weren't thinking about Debora when they decided on the "Heavenly Bride" subtitle. The black sheep of the Briscoletti family, Debora is self-absorbed, controlling, and in the eyes of her father, completely unmarriageable. But once she sees how far the hero will go to land her sister, she decides to throw her hat in the ring because she says the hero seems the type who's "willing to do anything and everything that I want."

Despite her distaste for physical exertion ("it plays havoc with my complexion"), Debora will insist on accompanying her husband on his quest so that she can make sure he's following her orders. Debora's a fierce fighter, able to strike twice per turn with her razor-sharp acrylic fingernails.

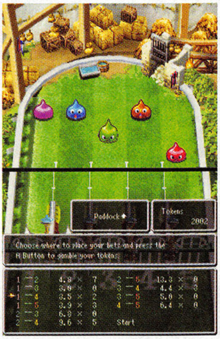


SQURENIX casts Kaswoosh!



Treacle

If you ever find yourself in trouble — when you are a little older, I mean — come to our land again.

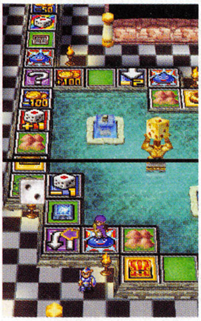


Tokens 2002

Choose where to place your bets and press the A Button to gamble your tokens.

```
1 — 2   4.8 × 7   2 — 5  13.3 × 0
1 — 3   3.0 × 0   3 — 4   4.4 × 3
1 — 4   3.5 × 2   3 — 5   5.0 × 0
1 — 5   3.9 × 3   4 — 5   6.4 × 0
2 — 3   6.8 × 0
2 — 4   9.6 × 5   Start
```

[Left] Wager on the slime races or enter a slime of your own. Or do both, you sneaky cheat!



[Left] Among the casino's newest games is a board-game adventure complete with enemies, shops, and hidden treasures.

from, every player's quest will unfold a little differently, and you'll find a new cast of allies each time you play.

GOOD HUES ALL AROUND

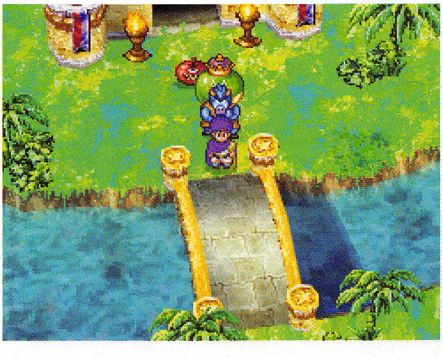
The DS version of Dragon Quest V uses the same engine as the recent Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen, but manages to find a lot more color to break up the cookie-cutter towns, towers, and dungeons. Visual highlights include a gorgeous waterfall cave, a bubbling volcano, a snowed-in fairy kingdom, and several other vivid new settings that look beautiful with the two-screen treatment. Once again, composer Koichi Sugiyama has delivered a fantastic soundtrack—easily one of the series' best.

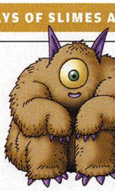
The battles remain fast-paced and richly animated, with weapons that can hit entire groups (or the entire battlefield) adding a bit of spice to the otherwise-straightforward, hammer-on-the-attack-button battle system that has long been the series' trademark. (Expect that to change a bit in the upcoming remake of the more tactical Dragon Quest VI).

When Dragon Quest V finally lands in North America, it will mark the end of a 17-year journey—nearly as long as the one in the game. But despite its age, Dragon Quest V retains much of the sparkle of youth. For although a few games in the ensuing years have experimented with the concept of an intergenerational storyline, none have pulled it off with anywhere near the same level of success. We'll find out on February 17th if the DQV hero's lifelong quest will come to so satisfying of an end.

THE STORY THUS FAR

Dragon Quest is one of the most successful franchises in video game history, but nearly all of its 45 million sales occurred in Japan. It never really caught on in the west due to years-late localizations of the early chapters (as the NES "Dragon Warrior" series) and Enix America's decision to cease localizing the series entirely. But an ambitious plan to remake Dragon Quest IV, V, and VI for the Nintendo DS has given new publisher Square Enix an opportunity at a fresh start.





FATHER *of* THE BRIDES

Dragon Quest V creator Yuji Horii explains the joys of tormenting players, why he would marry a woman who would ruin his life, and how Dragon Quest X will star a serial-killing mortician with superpowers trapped on a tropical island. (OK, maybe that last one is a bit of stretch....)

NINTENDO POWER **Dragon Quest V has a strong emotional impact that seems unusual in the generally lighthearted Dragon Quest series. Why did you decide to go in that direction?**

YUJI HORII In Dragon Quest V, I shifted the focus from a large cast to three generations of a single family battling a great evil. But it wasn't really my intention to change the atmosphere of the game. I guess that this type of story just had a strong emotional impact on players.

The game tells a powerful story with very little dialogue. What is the key to drawing people into a story without lengthy event scenes?

Dragon Quest originally had to get by with as little dialogue as possible due to the cartridge size restrictions of the past. So I've always made an effort to write short, dramatic lines that any player could understand, and that allow anybody to fill in the "missing gaps" on their own. Fortunately, that also gave players the freedom to expand upon the story in their mind and delve even deeper into the world of Dragon Quest.

The story forces players to make difficult choices that have long-term consequences. This is a concept that is explored heavily in Western RPGs, but rarely in Japanese ones. Why do you think that is? Is it something you would be interested in pursuing in future games?

One of my goals with Dragon Quest V was to "torment" players. I've always been mischievous and enjoy playing tricks on people. In this case, I think my personality just sort of came through in the game. At the time, I have to admit I wasn't thinking about Western RPG trends or what sort of story would be popular. I just wanted to get the player as involved in the game as possible.

The original version of Dragon Quest V was your first game for the Super Famicom [Japan's version of the Super NES]. What did the increased power of the Super Famicom allow you to do that hadn't been possible before?

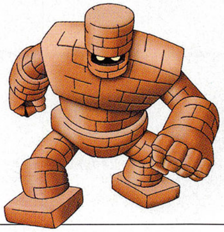
The biggest different between the Famicom and the Super Famicom is that the latter more than doubled the cartridge size. The hardware also allowed us to add a third dimension, height, to the two-dimensional worlds we had in past titles. So we were able to develop a game with an epic story and exciting environments.

Were there any games, movies, or novels that influenced the ideas in Dragon Quest V? What outside media is influencing your current development efforts?

Although I love to watch movies and read books, I can't say that any one in particular influenced Dragon Quest V. Although I guess in a broad sense, I could say that they affected my artistic taste, which went on to affect my ideas. Right now I am watching a number of American dramas such as *Lost*, *Heroes*, *Dexter*, and *Six Feet Under*. You can keep an eye on my future titles to see how these shows are affecting me now.

What was the inspiration for adding the character of Debora to the DS version of Dragon Quest V?

Since Dragon Quest V had already been remade on the PlayStation 2 in Japan, I wanted to put something entirely new in the DS version. Since Bianca and Nera were very popular as the hero's choices for his bride, I thought of adding another female character to the cast. But I wanted her to be someone that nobody in their right mind would ever pick! It was the perfect opportunity to torment players just a little bit more.



How did you decide which monsters would be recruitable for players? Do you have any sentimental favorites? Any suggestions for players?

In Dragon Quest IV, feedback from players was really positive regarding Healie, a Healslime that joined the party. So in Dragon Quest V, we introduced a full monster-recruitment system. I like all of the monsters, but I usually get attached to the first one that joins my party. I would suggest the Slime Knight, but my favorite is the Walking Corpse.

Do you find Japanese fans of the original Dragon Quest V are experiencing the game differently now that they themselves have grown up, married, and had children?

I have heard that from many people. They played Dragon Quest when they were young and now have children of their own. When they were kids, all they thought about was beating the game, but after playing it years later, they found themselves with a better understanding of characters like Pankraz, the hero's father. Or they used to always choose Nera because of the items you could get, but now feel bad for Bianca. But then they still go and choose Nera!

As a game designer, which do you find more challenging: coming up with major themes like the generational quest in Dragon Quest V, or new scenarios for the towers and dungeons along the way?

When I begin work on a new Dragon Quest title, I always think about why the hero is on his journey. Thinking about this, the heart of the story, always takes the longest amount of time. So I would have to say that coming up with the major theme is the most challenging.

What one thing do you believe Dragon Quest does better than any other video game series?

Although many people don't realize it, Dragon Quest doesn't tell its story in a linear fashion—it tells it across a much broader plane. What I mean is that the story doesn't only develop through the main characters. The story becomes apparent by conversing with people in towns or villages. So I also spend a lot of time thinking about how those townspeople and other characters will talk. The player has a chance to speak with a large variety of characters and experience different ideas and emotions.

I also think Dragon Quest is very user-friendly. While making a game, it's very easy to start seeing things only through the eyes of a creator, and leave the user's perspective behind. While the creator understands everything about the game, the player doesn't know a single thing coming in. Although the main Dragon Quest series is about to see its ninth installment, the game's system and story have been crafted with first-time players in mind, and will be enjoyable for anybody.

If you were a single man of the Dragon Quest V hero's age, which heroine would you chose to marry?

Now that's a tough question! Normally I'd lean towards Bianca, but emotions are a very tricky thing! There's something about Debora's wicked nature that I find appealing, so I would probably go with her. But then my life would become a wreck, and I would regret not choosing Bianca when I had the chance! Life is full of some difficult decisions, isn't it?

FROM A LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

GET THE ULTIMATE SUMMER EXPERIENCE

DIGIPEN ProjectFUN WORKSHOPS

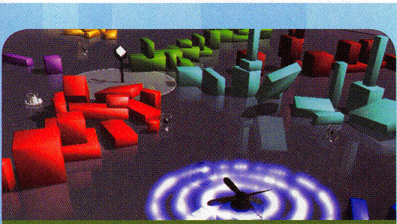
DigiPen Institute of Technology, recognized by the industry as a premier game development college, presents a two-week summer workshop series designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of *game programming*, *3D computer animation*, *game design* and *robotics*.

- **Get an opportunity to tour portions of Nintendo of America**
- **Awesome after-school activites with game tournaments and guest industry speakers**
- **Explore the Developers Gallery where many local game companies will be showcased**

Find out more or sign-up for an online information session at

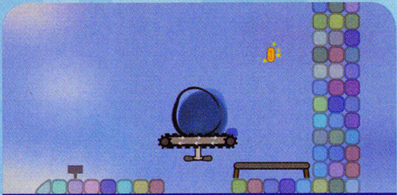
WORKSHOPS.DIGIPEN.EDU

DigiPen
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
5001 150th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98052
(866) 478-5236 • ***www.digipen.edu***

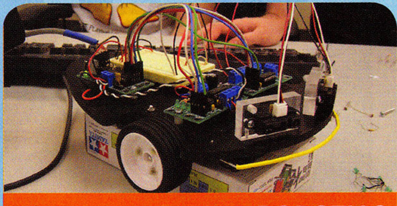


GAME PROGRAMMING

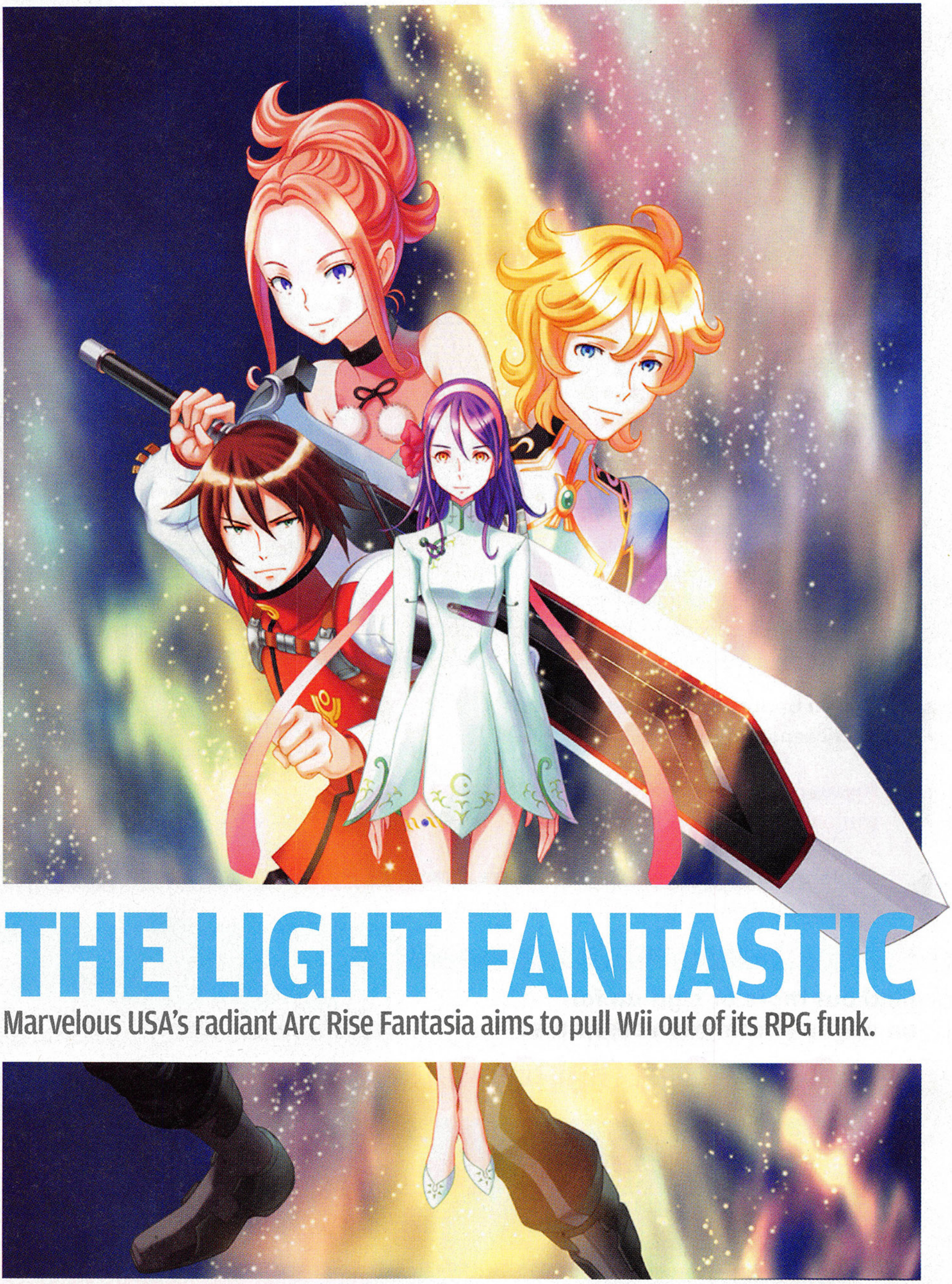
3D ANIMATION



GAME DESIGN



ROBOTICS

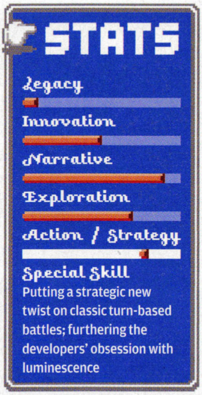


THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

Marvelous USA's radiant Arc Rise Fantasia aims to pull Wii out of its RPG funk.

BY CASEY LOE

Despite its similar level of success, Wii hasn't hosted half as many role-playing games as the PlayStation 2 did in its early years. "Wii is largely regarded as being used for social gatherings in the living room, while RPGs are characterized mainly as being a single-player experience," theorizes Marvelous Entertainment's producer Hideyuki Mizutani. "Perhaps that's why so few RPGs have been released on the platform." Now that publishers have had time to feel out what does and doesn't work on Wii, Mizutani and producer Ryoei Mikage of ImageEpoch expect to see the dearth of Wii RPGs come to an end. But for now the pair is relishing the opportunity provided by an RPG-hungry audience that's willing to take a chance on an original idea. That's why, Mikage says, the team "really wanted to create a title that's neither a port nor a spin-off from an established series, but a genuinely new RPG for Wii."



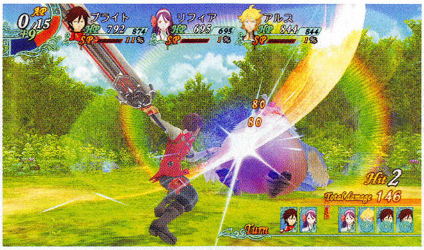
Special Skill
Putting a strategic new twist on classic turn-based battles; furthering the developers' obsession with luminescence

Enter Arc Rise Fantasia, an original fantasy epic codeveloped by Marvelous and ImageEpoch (the latter is the development studio behind Marvelous's Luminous Arc series and Sega's Sands of Destruction and 7th Dragon). In making their first console title, Mikage and his company turned to the RPG veterans who had worked on the GameCube's breakout RPG hit Tales of Symphonia. "I used to work at Namco Tales Studio when I was in college," says Mikage, explaining how he was able to poach Symphonia's game designer, CG director, scenario writer, and main battle programmer—among others—to work on Arc Rise Fantasia.

It's not surprising, then, that Arc Rise Fantasia feels an awful lot like a Tales game. Its world is drenched in bright colors, and its spirited cast is bursting with cheerful camaraderie. Towns and dungeons appear as miniature dioramas on a lush world map across which your hero can run from location to location. Enemies are freely visible, allowing you to avoid combat if you're spry enough. There's even a version of Tales's trademark skit system, where you press the 2 Button to trigger optional conversation between your party members. But the similarities to Tales of Symphonia disappear as soon as a battle begins.

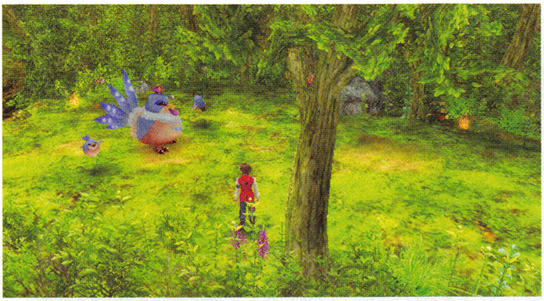
THE "I" IN TEAM

Instead of the Tales series' frantic real-time battling, Arc Rise Fantasia uses an original turn-based system with a dash of strategy-RPG flavor. In our early version of the game, the battle system is a clear highlight, nearly as strategically deep as it is rousingly paced. The brightly colored battles look great, load in a fraction of a second, and feature a varied cast of guest characters in addition to the trio of playable heroes. That trio has a set number of ability points to spend each turn, and you can distribute them however you like—by having your best fighter attack three times, for example, or by having each member attack once. No longer must you force your mages to futilely whack at foes with their staves when you're trying to conserve MP—now you're at liberty to ignore all but your most effective characters. "Whether you wish to fight strategically or use your favorite characters to push your way through by sheer force is totally up to the player," promises

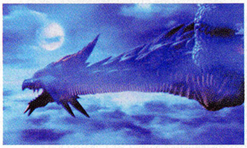


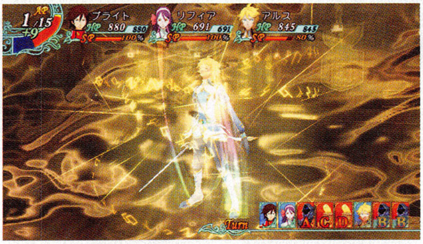
[Right] Is Ryfia's hibiscus flower real or plastic? L'Arc goes in for a sniff.

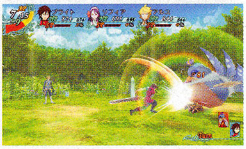
AP
0/15
+9
HP 171 875
SP 31%
リフィア
HP 458 690
SP 100%
アルス
HP 656 852
SP 100%
フジヤマピラー
Turn



[Left] You can see enemies on the field, and avoid them if you want. Or you could go out of your way to kill this adorable bird monster in front of her own chicks, you psychopath.







Mikage. But his team was working with the philosophy that the friendship and chemistry of your party should anchor the game's battle system as much as it does the narrative, so while focusing on a solo hero is always an option, those who lead their party in skillful cooperation will reap far greater rewards. Having multiple characters attacking the same foe can net you teamwork bonuses, and having two characters simultaneously cast a low-level spell against the same target will result in the pair tandem-casting a far deadlier incantation. You'll also need to have everyone get their hands dirty if you want to charge up their SP bars, which allow you to dish out powerful special attacks and healing arts that can turn a losing battle around.

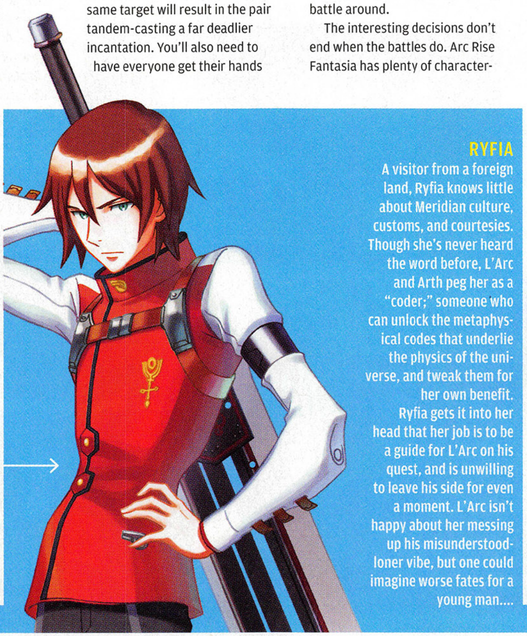
The interesting decisions don't end when the battles do. Arc Rise Fantasia has plenty of character-customization mechanics that allow you to handcraft each hero's arsenal and spell book. Each weapon levels up as you use it in combat, and as weapons gain power, their abilities begin to pop off in the form of geometric pieces. Those pieces can then be traded among your party or slotted Tetris-style into the frames of future weapons your heroes acquire (provided the weapons have sufficient space for them).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

L'ARC BRIGHT LAGOON

Let that sink in for a minute—*L'Arc Bright Lagoon.* Isn't that the most RPG-tastic name you've ever heard in your entire life? Take your gunblade and go home, Squall Leonheart from Final Fantasy VIII—your reign is over.

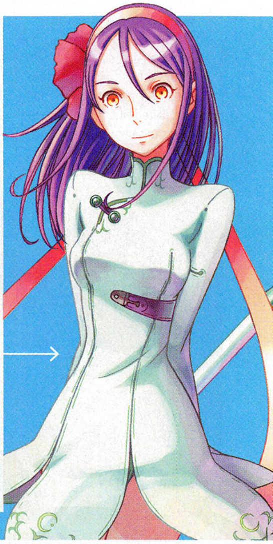
L'Arc is a gruff mercenary, but does he have a heart of gold? He just might! At least he isn't an orphan, but he probably wishes he were. He has to work hard to support a sick mom and a creepy elderly "uncle" who pockets his entire paycheck even as he's ogling Ryfia. Eww. No wonder L'Arc joined the military.



RYFIA

A visitor from a foreign land, Ryfia knows little about Meridian culture, customs, and courtesies. Though she's never heard the word before, L'Arc and Arth peg her as a "coder;" someone who can unlock the metaphysical codes that underlie the physics of the universe, and tweak them for her own benefit.

Ryfia gets it into her head that her job is to be a guide for L'Arc on his quest, and is unwilling to leave his side for even a moment. L'Arc isn't happy about her messing up his misunderstood-loner vibe, but one could imagine worse fates for a young man....

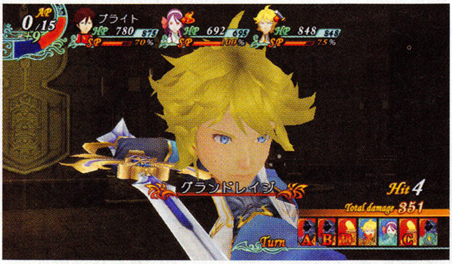


Magical abilities stem from each character's "cage," which can be leveled up in special shops and fit with gems that enable spellcasting of various element types. There's an interesting bit of tension in balancing your desire to have a wide variety of elemental attacks with the ability to use tandem casting, which requires everyone to know the same spells. As befits the developers' empower-the-player philosophy, the game won't push you in one direction or the other.

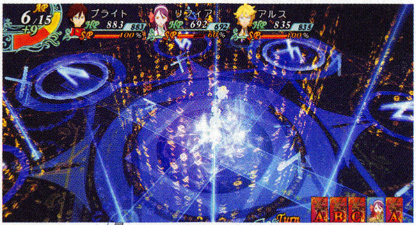
MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Arc Rise Fantasia's spacious world offers a lot of ground to cover, but protagonist L'Arc's party moves through it at a fairly rapid clip. "We are being careful on the game pacing, but completing the main story will probably take around 30 hours of gameplay," says Mikage. "It seems like most game designs in the US are 10-15 hours for the main story, but for a Japanese RPG it's really difficult to fit everything in 10 hours. We think 30 hours for the main story plus optional side quests is a good balance for this game." Those side quests include a system of guild jobs of the sort where average folk can hire your party out to slay ten frogs or collect five flowers, as well as a casino packed with minigames. Although the main game doesn't use any of the pointing or motion-sensing capabilities of the Wii Remote, Mikage promises that some of the minigames will.

While Arc Rise Fantasia won't give your arms much of a workout, it'll certainly get your eardrums



[Right] Ryfia's Resurrection Ray can revive the entire party. But it's no good hiding your healer in the back—you'll need to send her into combat to charge it up.



RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

☐ Spikey-haired protagonist

☑ Earnest/clueless female lead

☐ Amnesia as key plot point

☐ Events foretold by prophecy

☐ Random battles

☑ Orphaned party members

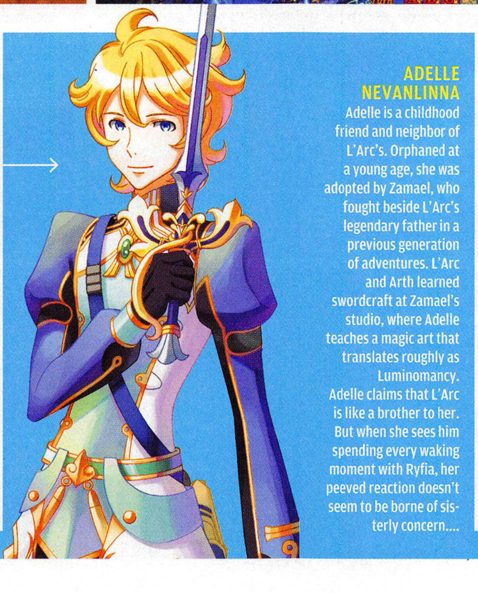
☑ Airship travel

☑ Heroes are underage

? Technology is evil

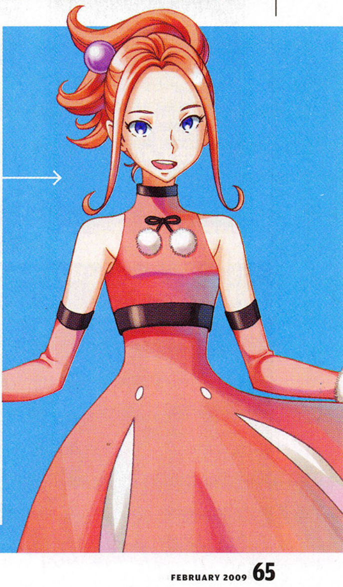
ALPHONSE "ARTH" ZENA MERIDIA

Being an imperial prince sound like a sweet gig, but not when it's your hard-ass older brother who gets to inherit all the power and glory. Poor Alphonse—Arth to his friends—gets stuck with the dirty jobs, which include fighting off a herd of befouled dragons that erupt in toxic explosions when they die. Meanwhile, big bro is back at the castle eating peeled grapes and provoking needless wars with neighboring nations. No wonder Arth finds less comfort in meetings with the aristocracy than he does in his unlikely friendship with common mercenary L'Arc. →



ADELLE NEVANLINNA

Adelle is a childhood friend and neighbor of L'Arc's. Orphaned at a young age, she was adopted by Zamael, who fought beside L'Arc's legendary father in a previous generation of adventures. L'Arc and Arth learned swordcraft at Zamael's studio, where Adelle teaches a magic art that translates roughly as Luminomancy. Adelle claims that L'Arc is like a brother to her. But when she sees him spending every waking moment with Ryfia, her peeved reaction doesn't seem to be borne of sisterly concern.... →



thumping. Most RPG fans should be familiar with the musical works of Yasunori Mitsuda, who rose to prominence with the soundtracks for the Chrono and Xenogears/Xenosaga series before contributing to ImageEpoch's Nintendo DS efforts. The producers are coy about how much of the soundtrack Mitsuda composed personally, but the music in the game's opening hours is very promising, with loose melodies and clear, rich instruments that are highly reminiscent of the much-lauded soundtrack for Chrono Cross. Man, is it nice to have Mitsuda working on a disc-based platform again.

THE STORY THUS FAR

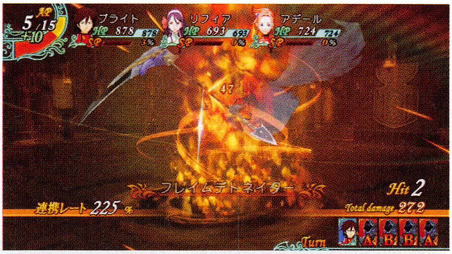
The first collaboration between Marvelous and ImageEpoch was DS RPG Luminous Arc, and the title and concepts in Arc Rise Fantasia display a similar interest in light and arcs. Does that make Arc Rise Fantasia a spin-off, or at least a spiritual descendent of its DS predecessor? Mikage explains, sort of: "We used the word arc in Luminous Arc for the first time, but it represents our feelings towards entertainment in general. A lot of people are involved in the making of a title, and each of our individual wishes has a small shine to it. When all the individual lights come together, it grows to become a big ray of light, which is what makes entertainment shine." So, um...no, I guess? Or yes? Kinda?

IT STILL BEATS OIL

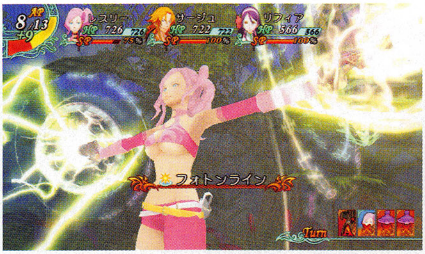
As proud as the developers are of Arc Rise Fantasia's battle system, soundtrack, and character designs, both men go straight for the storyline when asked to name the team's primary focus. "I believe that a rich story with abundant imagination is what moves people," Mizutani declares, and to call Arc Rise Fantasia's story "rich" would not be an understatement. The game features a huge supporting cast, dozens of plot threads, and a worldview built around numerous intersections between divinity and technology. I pity the translator who has to come up with English equivalents for the scores upon scores of new words the team invented to make sense of it all.

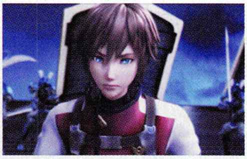
The tale begins when imperial mercenary L'Arc is sent plummeting from his airship in an overzealous attempt at dragon-slaying. Surviving thanks to highly questionable physics and a timely bend of the knees, he encounters a lovely girl named Ryfia on his long walk home. Ryfia is a priestess of sorts, visiting the Meridian Empire from an enemy nation to pursue her mother's dying wish that Ryfia doesn't fully understand. After rejoining with Arth, a friend and imperial prince, L'Arc wants nothing more than to escort Ryfia out of the empire.

But when a stranger makes an attempt on Ryfia's life, the trio is forced to flee to the tower that houses the empire's central power supply: a minor deity whose divine rays power all of the empire's warships, artillery cannons, and electric fondue pots. Mining captive deities for energy does seem like the sort of common-sense, rock-solid energy plan that could never possibly go awry, but—spoiler alert—it does. And with a mysterious visitor from an enemy nation and an imperial prince in the mix, the stage is set for a perfect storm of political upheavals, spiritual awakenings, and ecological catastrophe. What more could you ask for from Wii's first original RPG epic?

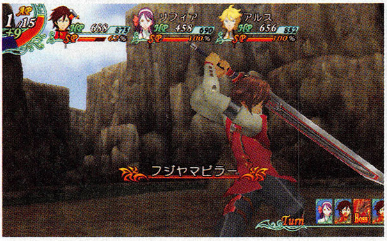

AP 5/15 +10
ブライト HP 878 878 SP 3%
リフィア HP 693 693 SP 0%
アデール HP 724 724 SP 0%
47
フレイムデトネイター
連携レート 225 %
Hit 2
Total damage 272
Turn

[Above] When the enemies in the move-order list line up to spell "ABBA," the game plays the opening bars of "Dancing Queen." OK, that's a lie. Wouldn't that be great, though?


AP 8/13 +9
レスリー HP 726 726 SP 78%
サージュ HP 722 722 SP 100%
リフィア HP 566 566 SP 100%
フォトンライン
Turn

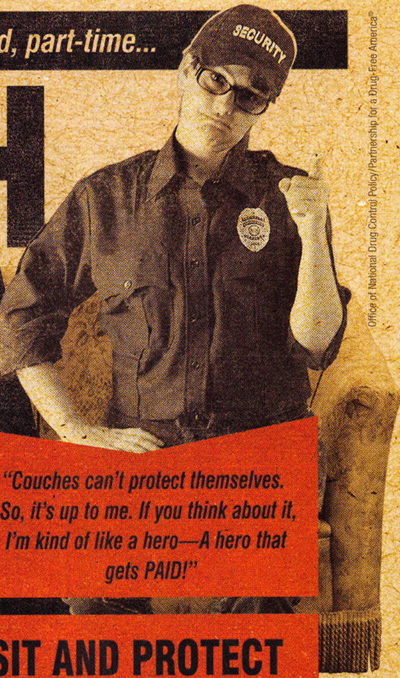


[Right] I know it's tempting, but whatever's in that chest just isn't worth it. Trust me.



Spend your DAYS and NIGHTS as a certified, part-time...

COUCH SECURITY GUARD!!!



"Couches can't protect themselves. So, it's up to me. If you think about it, I'm kind of like a hero—A hero that gets PAID!"

Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America®

CAN YOU HANDLE EXCITEMENT...

...cheese curls, leprechauns and sitting on a cushion for a LONG, LONG time? Then maybe you have what it takes to become a COUCH SECURITY GUARD!

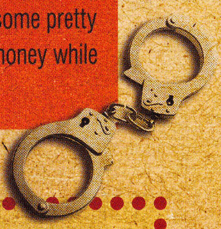
Few careers offer a person thrills AND rich rewards. It's not a dream. A career like this can be yours. Even with no experience or a fancy college degree. Get the facts today and start sitting tomorrow!

COUCH SECURITY

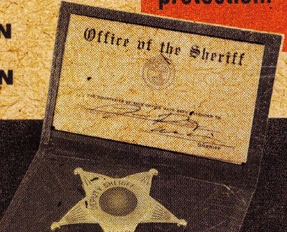
Thousands of couches need protection!

SIT AND PROTECT

And make some pretty awesome money while you do!



LEARN ON YOUR VERY OWN COUCH!



Full-time is for full-time suckers!

Start Earning Now...

FOR a FREE BAG of CHEESE CURLS & YOUR OFFICIAL BADGE, FILL OUT THIS FORM AT: couchsecurity.com

NAME:______________________

EMAIL:______________________

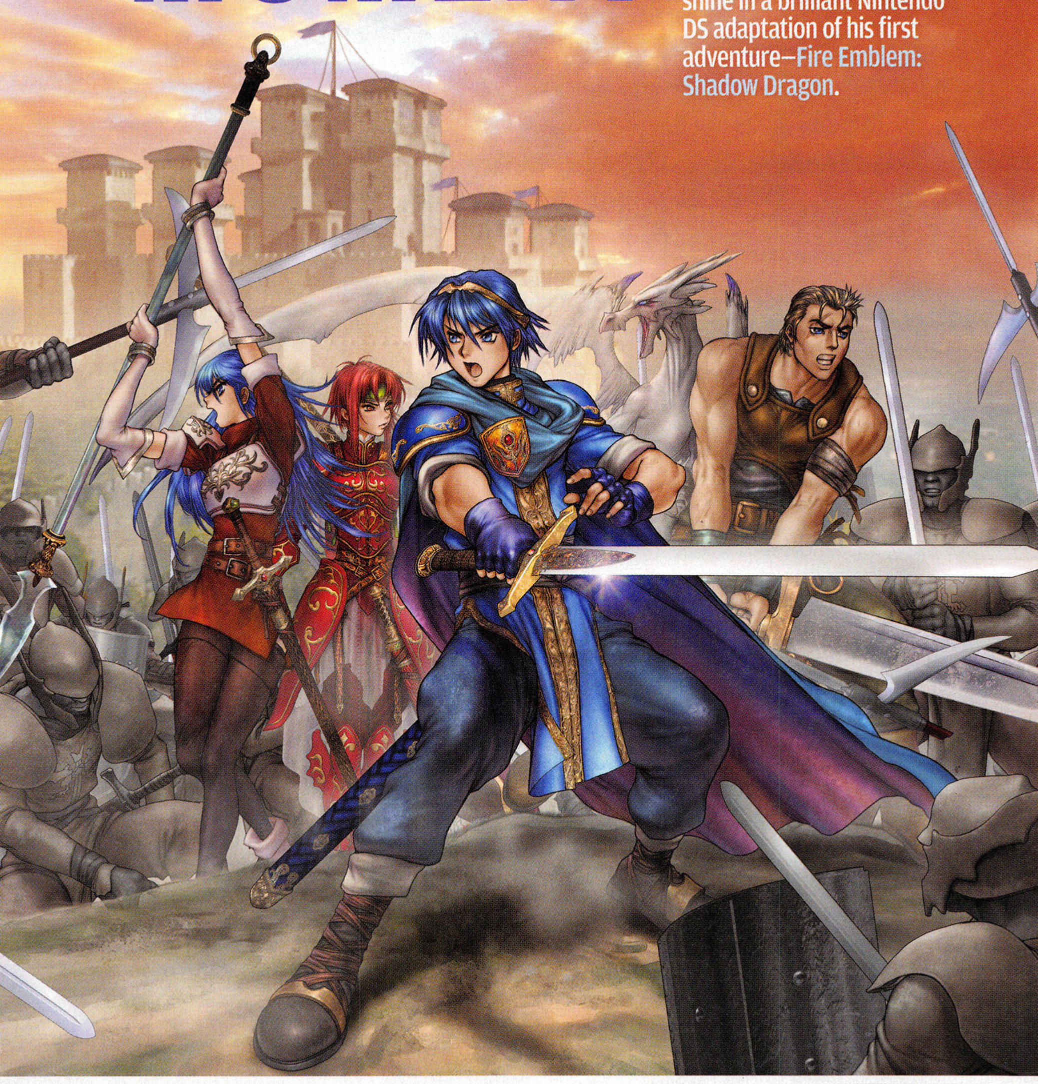
ADDRESS:____________________

Hey, not trying to be your mom, but there aren't many jobs out there for potheads.

abovetheinfluence.com

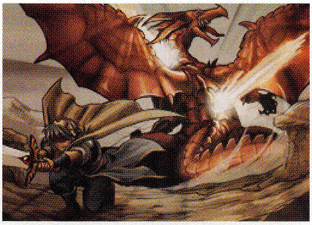
MARTH'S MOMENT

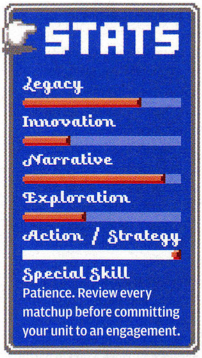
Long before Prince Marth unsheathed his blade in Super Smash Bros. he led an epic struggle against tyranny. Now, after almost 20 years, it's Marth's time to shine in a brilliant Nintendo DS adaptation of his first adventure—Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon.



BY SCOTT PELLAND

IN NORTH AMERICA PRINCE MARTH is best known as the blue-haired swordsman from Super Smash Bros., but his finest hour as well as his origin lies in the world of Fire Emblem—Intelligent Systems's epic tactics franchise—and it was Fire Emblem's popularity in Japan that earned Marth his place in the Smash Bros. pantheon of beloved Nintendo characters. In early 2009, Intelligent Systems and Nintendo will revisit that original Fire Emblem game with a retooled version for Nintendo DS. Beginning with the original game's story and battle scenarios, Shadow Dragon's development team added all-new graphics, sound, touch controls, prologue missions, and the franchise's first online-multiplayer options. Players will enter a world in conflict where characters have but one life to live and where treachery is as common as heroism. Along with the Advance Wars games (also created by Intelligent Systems) the Fire Emblem titles are arguably the finest examples of turn-based tactical RPGs in the gaming firmament, and Shadow Dragon is the jewel in the series' crown.



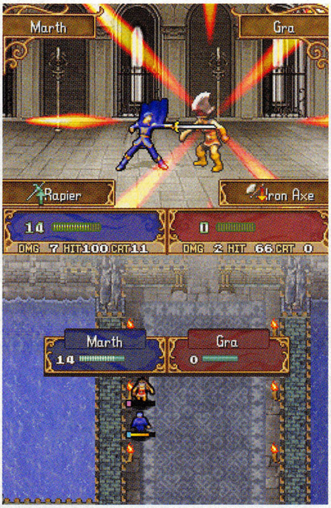


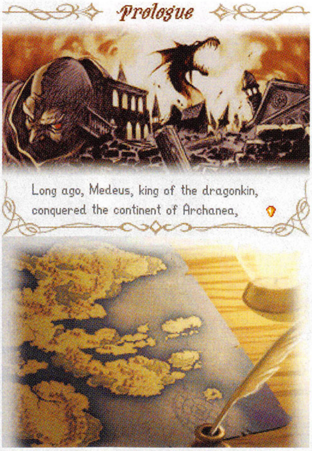
Special Skill
Patience. Review every matchup before committing your unit to an engagement.

IT WAS A DARK *and* STORMY TIME...

Centuries prior to Shadow Dragon's era, the continent of Archanea was under the dark dominion of Medeus, king of the dragonkin. That historical chapter was closed by a young hero named Anri, who struck down the Shadow Dragon and became the king of Altea. Fast-forward to Shadow Dragon's first prologue, and we find Anri's descendents facing a revitalized Medeus, who is in league with an evil sorcerer named Ghamef. Prince Marth's father, King Cornelius, sets off to quell the evildoers, but his forces are betrayed and his family back home must flee for their lives. Young Marth finds himself in exile on the Isle of Talys, and from there he sets out on his quest to crush Medeus's ambitions.

The game progresses by chapters, each preceded by a narrative prologue and developed through cut-scene conversations or soliloquies. Conversations that take place during and after battles further propel the story. Multiple game-save slots give you the opportunity to replay chapters, which is particularly important if you mess up and lose a powerful character or if you think you might have missed recruiting a new ally. Within some battles you'll be given limited opportunities to save your progress, as well.





Long ago, Medeus, king of the dragonkin, conquered the continent of Archanea,

[Left] Prince Marth is betrayed by his protectors—soldiers from the fickle land of Gra.

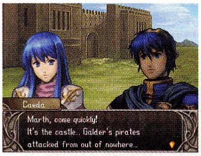
Marth in America

Prince Marth first appeared in North America as an unlockable character in Super Smash Bros. Melee for Nintendo GameCube in 2001, and he returned in Super Smash Bros. Brawl for Wii last year. As one of the sword-wielding combatants, it's little wonder he became a fan favorite, even if North American players had never encountered his heroic deeds in the Fire Emblem series. I encourage Marth's fans, even those who haven't played a tactical RPG before, to explore Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon. The in-game help is excellent, and the prologue chapters will turn anyone into a pro in no time.

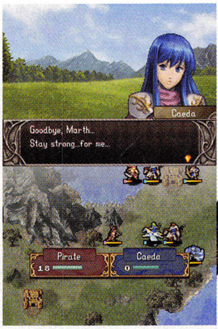
A GAME *with* CHARACTER

In tactical games like Advance Wars, units are impersonal, but in Fire Emblem each unit is a fleshed-out character. You'll direct their conversations, manage their growth, choose new classifications for them, buy and upgrade their weapons, monitor their inventories, and command their every step and action during battles. You don't build them, but rather you meet them, and in many cases you must encourage them to join Marth's cause; from that moment on you'll invest time and effort in them. If you're careless and lose a unit in battle, you may well feel as if you've lost a friend. Likewise, if you don't avail yourself of opportunities to talk to characters during battles, you could miss the chance to recruit a powerful or useful ally. Managing dynamic character relationships makes for a rich and ever-changing experience, and provides a great reason to revisit a chapter or replay the entire game.

In addition to being formed by your direct actions, characters are shaped by battle experience. They earn experience when they engage enemies, and as their levels increase so will their stats, making them stronger, faster, more agile, and so forth. Each character belongs to a class that determines the type of weapon or staff he or she can wield. Some classes have special skills, such as a pirate's ability to cross water. In many chapters you'll have the chance to choose which characters to take into battle with you, so building a balanced army with many classes and with varying talents will give you the most choices and the best chances for success.

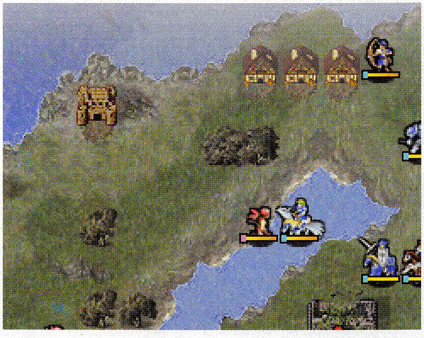

Caeda

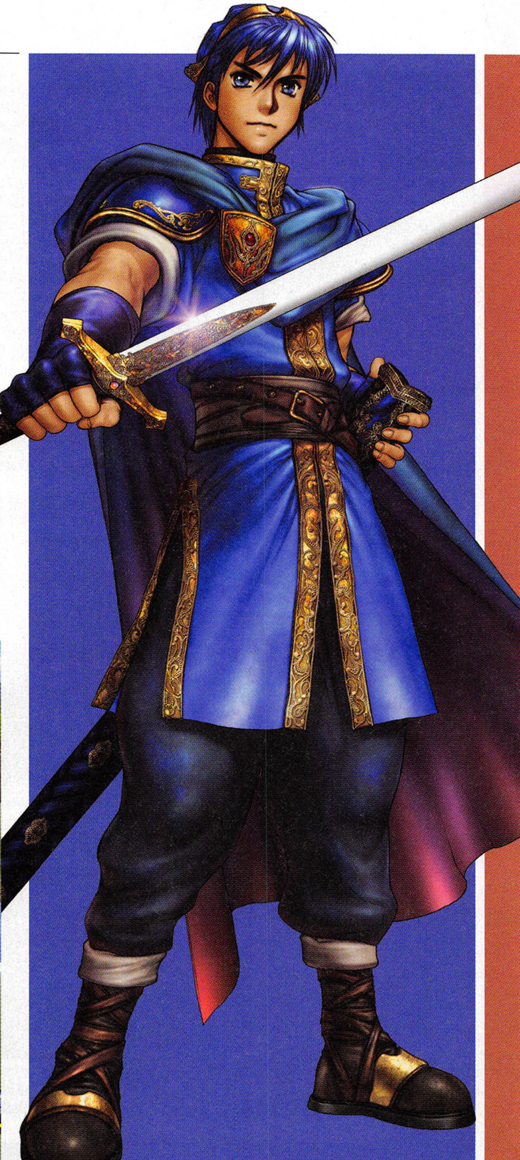
Marth, come quickly!
It's the castle... Galder's pirates
attacked from out of nowhere...


Caeda

Goodbye, Marth...
Stay strong...for me...

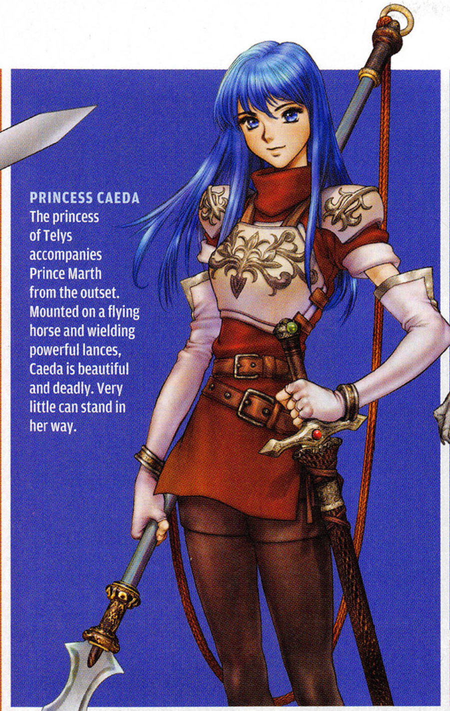
[Right] You'll regret that your units have but one life to give to your game. [Below] Some characters have special abilities. Both Pegasus Knights and Pirates can cross water, but PKs such as Princess Caeda can fly over mountains, too.





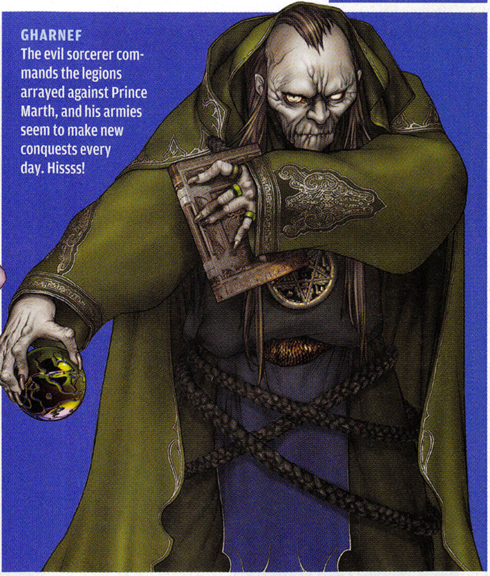
PRINCE MARTH

Our hero can wield many weapons, but he must command loyalty, as well. A word from Marth may be just what's needed to convince a brigand to change his ways and join your ragtag army. Prince Marth is the one character you cannot let die. If he falls in battle, the game ends automatically.



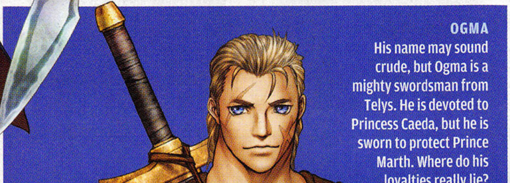
PRINCESS CAEDA

The princess of Telys accompanies Prince Marth from the outset. Mounted on a flying horse and wielding powerful lances, Caeda is beautiful and deadly. Very little can stand in her way.



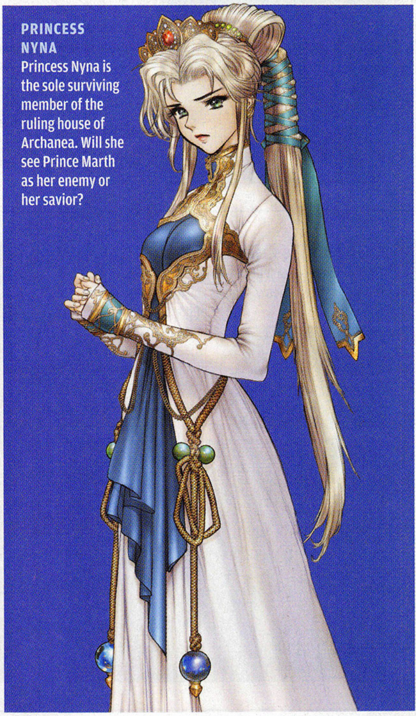
GHARNEF

The evil sorcerer commands the legions arrayed against Prince Marth, and his armies seem to make new conquests every day. Hissss!



OGMA

His name may sound crude, but Ogma is a mighty swordsman from Telys. He is devoted to Princess Caeda, but he is sworn to protect Prince Marth. Where do his loyalties really lie?



PRINCESS NYNA

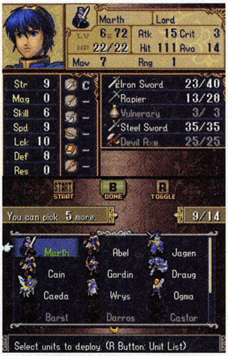
Princess Nyna is the sole surviving member of the ruling house of Archanea. Will she see Prince Marth as her enemy or her savior?

THE FACE *of* BATTLE

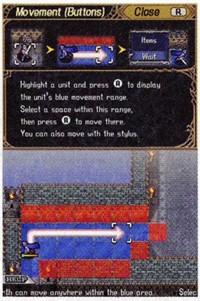
The heart and soul of any Fire Emblem game is the action on the battlefield. In Shadow Dragon, numerous tools have been included to assist your planning and execution of smart battlefield tactics. In most chapters you'll have extraordinary freedom to choose and command your units however you like. Mission goals may vary, but seizing the well-defended yellow grid square should always be foremost on your mind. On the following two pages, we've shown much of what comes into play when you go to war.

BATTLE PREPARATIONS

In the game's early chapters you'll head straight to the battlefield without having a chance to customize your army or equipment. That changes when you are introduced to Battle Preparations—a critical prebattle phase in which you have control over virtually every aspect of your strategy, from equipping and supplying your units to placing them on the battlefield. Only Marth's beginning location is always predetermined. You can look over the map and enemy locations, review character stats, reclassify characters, and manage your inventory. At the armory you can purchase new weapons for individual characters (if you have enough gold to pay for them) and you can "forge" improvements to make your weapons more effective. It's even possible to inscribe weapons with a new name.



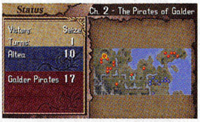
Marth Lord
Lv 6 E 72 Atk 15 Crit 3
HP 22/22 Hit 111 Avo 14
Mov 7 Rng 1
Str 9 Mag 0 Skill 6 Spd 9 Lck 10 Def 8 Res 0
Elron Sword 23/40
Rapier 13/28
Vulnerary 3/3
Steel Sword 35/35
Devil Axe 25/25
You can pick 5 more. 9/14
Marth Abel Jagen Cain Gordin Draug Caeda Wrys Ogma Barst Darros Castor
Select units to deploy. (R Button: Unit List)



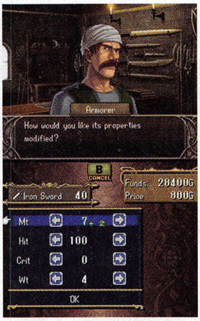
Highlight a unit and press Ⓐ to display the unit's blue movement range. Select a space within this range, then press Ⓐ to move there. You can also move with the stylus.

th can move anywhere within the blue area.

You can explore the battlefield and review enemy units prior to launching the battle.



Status
Ch. 2 - The Pirates of Galder
Victory: Seize
Turns: 1
Altea 10
Galder Pirates 17



Armorer
How would you like its properties modified?
Funds: 28400G
Price 800G
Iron Sword 40
Mt 7+2
Hit 100
Crit 0
Wt 4

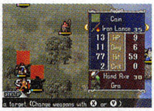
WEAPON USE

Weapons have a limited lifetime. An armament's remaining hits will be reduced each time it is used. If you're not careful, your character could be stuck in battle without a weapon. Fortunately, you can trade weapons with other characters during battle, and you can even visit armories in many cases to obtain new arms.

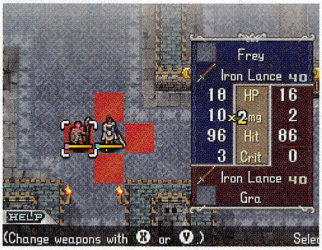
Gra
Cain
Hand Axe
Iron Lance
9
13
DMG 6 HIT 59 CRT 0
DMG 11 HIT 77 CRT 2

COMBAT FORECAST

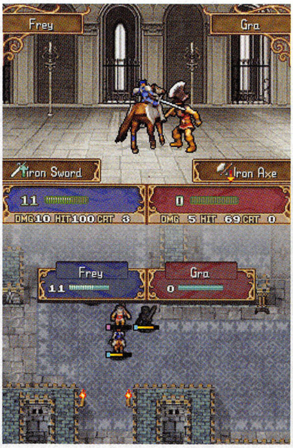
The Combat Forecast display pops up once you've chosen to attack an enemy. It gives you a direct comparison of the two opposing units and a preview of what to expect based on the weapons and characters that are ready to clash.



Cain
Iron Lance 35
13 HP 9
11 Dmg 6
77 Hit 59
2 Crit 0
Hand Axe 30
Gra
a target. (Change weapons with Ⓧ or Ⓨ)



Frey
Iron Lance 40
18 HP 16
10×2 Dmg 2
96 Hit 86
3 Crit 0
Iron Lance 40
Gra
(Change weapons with Ⓧ or Ⓨ)

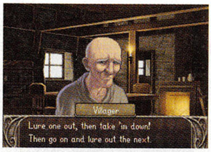


SKIRMISHES

Animations of skirmishes appear on the top screen, and sometimes you'll view a cut-scene with dialogue, particularly if you are engaging a key opponent.

Gra
Cain
Iron Lance
Iron Lance
16
18
DMG 2 HIT 86 CRT 0
DMG 10 HIT 94 CRT 2

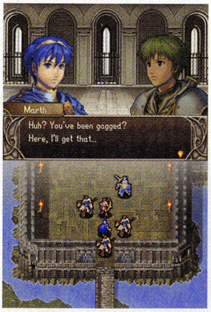
[Left] Marth's companion, Frey, makes quick work of a treacherous Gra soldier. But if you want to speed up battles, you can turn off the animations.



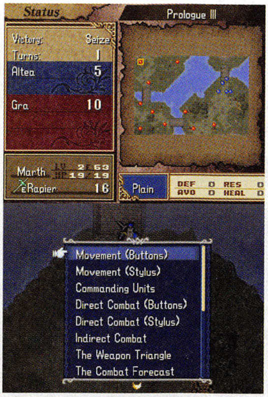
Lure one out, then take 'im down!
Then go on and lure out the next.

ENCOUNTERS

When you move a character beside a friend or foe, you may receive the Talk option. It's always a good idea to hear what a character has to say. More often than not, the message will be to your advantage.



Huh? You've been gagged?
Here, I'll get that...


Status
Prologue III
Victory: Seize
Turns: 1
Altea 5
Gra 10
Marth LV 2 63
HP 19 19
eRapier 16
Plain
DEF 0 RES 0
AVO 0 HEAL 0
Movement (Buttons)
Movement (Stylus)
Commanding Units
Direct Combat (Buttons)
Direct Combat (Stylus)
Indirect Combat
The Weapon Triangle
The Combat Forecast

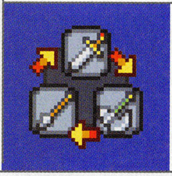
Scroll through the Guide listings at any time if you need an explanation of any of the game's central topics.

THE GUIDE

The in-game Guide option is a great aid for newcomers to the franchise. More than two dozen critical terms and concepts are explained. During the prologue and early chapters, tutorials (if you so choose) will periodically pop up to explain new concepts, as well.

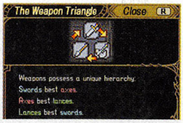
RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

☐ Spiky-haired protagonist
☑ Earnest/clueless female lead
☐ Amnesia a key plot point
☐ Events foretold by prophecy
☐ Random battles
☑ Orphaned party members
☐ Airship travel
☑ Underage heroes
☐ Technology is evil



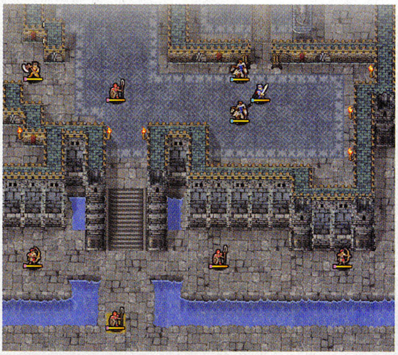
THE WEAPON TRIANGLE

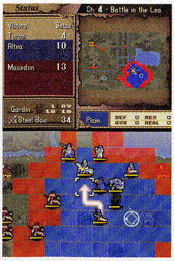
Sword bests axe, axe bests lance, lance bests sword. Learn the triangle. This is like type-trumping in Pokémon. It's critical to enter encounters with an advantage.

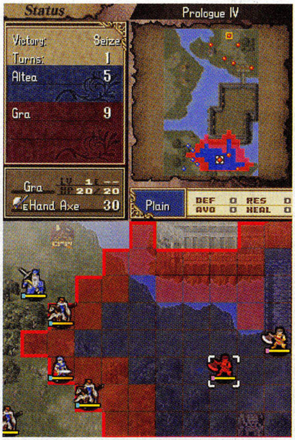

The Weapon Triangle
Close R
Weapons possess a unique hierarchy:
Swords best axes.
Axes best lances.
Lances best swords.

THE MAP

You'll encounter many types of landscapes and battlefields as you progress, but all of them consist of a grid of squares upon which your characters move and fight. You'll often find castles, mountains, rivers, bridges, villages, armories, and lakes. Characters move across the map grid according to their own movement limitations, the terrain, and locations of other characters. You can view movement and attack ranges for both allies and enemies, and obtain information about enemy units to help you determine which of your forces to pit against them. You should also be able to determine what square you must seize to claim victory.




Status
Ch. 4 - Battle in the Lea
Victory Seize
Turns 4
Altea 10
Macedon 13
Gordin
Steel Bow 34
Plain
DEF 0 RES 0
AVO 0 HEAL 0


Status
Prologue IV
Victory: Seize
Turns: 1
Altea 5
Gra 9
Gra LV 1
HP 20 20
eHand Axe 30
Plain
DEF 0 RES 0
AVO 0 HEAL 0

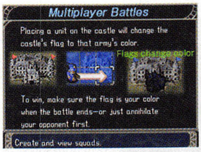
Some battles take place in enclosed spaces such as castles. But even if you don't have to worry about varied terrain, you should still begin your engagement by scrolling around the battlefield, sizing up the enemy characters, and looking for ambush points, where you can face one foe at a time.

THE WORLD *is* ON FIRE

Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon enters the online realm—a first for the series—with players being able to connect via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection to battle, collect special cards that give you a tactical bonus during online battles, and even talk directly to friends using the DS's built-in microphone. Two-player modes also exist for wireless LAN matchups. An online store will give players more options for spending their hard-won gold; rare and powerful items will rotate in and out of the shop on a daily basis, so frequent shopping trips will be a must. There's even a Loan Units feature that allows players to borrow and command units in their campaign. All of this adds to an already extraordinarily deep gaming experience.

THE STORY THUS FAR

Many basic elements introduced in the original Fire Emblem game have remained as permanent aspects of the series—the chapter format, the medieval worlds, the continent-in-conflict theme, and the importance of unique characters—but innovation has also played a role. The fifth title (only released in Japan) was broadcast over the Super Famicom Satellaview network, and the fourth title explored a completely unrelated universe.



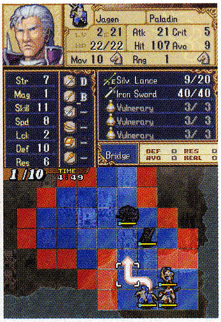
Multiplayer Battles

Placing a unit on the castle will change the castle's flag to that army's color.

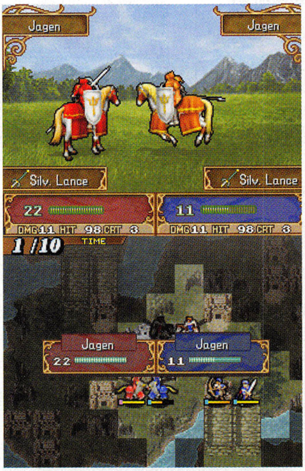
Flags change color

To win, make sure the flag is your color when the battle ends—or just annihilate your opponent first.

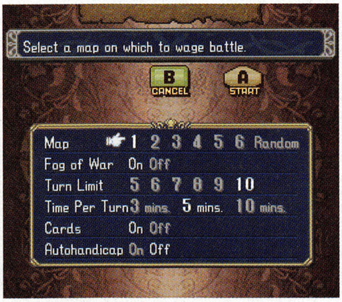
Create and view squads.



Jagen Paladin
LV 2 E 21 Atk 21 Crit 5
HP 22/22 Hit 107 Avo 9
Mov 10 Rng 1
Str 7 D
Mag 1 B
Skill 11 –
Spd 8 –
Lck 2 –
Def 10 –
Res 6 –
E Silv. Lance 9/20
Iron Sword 40/40
Vulnerary 3/ 3
Vulnerary 3/ 3
Vulnerary 3/ 3
Bridge DEF 0 RES 0 AVO 0 HEAL 0
1 /10 TIME 4:49


Jagen
Jagen
Silv. Lance
Silv. Lance
22
11
DMG 11 HIT 98 CRT 3
DMG 11 HIT 98 CRT 3
1 /10
TIME
Jagen
22
Jagen
11

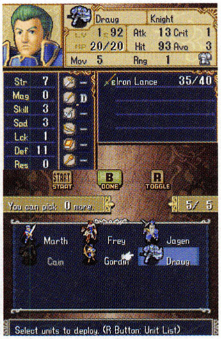
[Below] You can customize your two-player battles by choosing the battlefield map, time limits, fog of war, and other options.



Select a map on which to wage battle.

B CANCEL
A START

Map 1 2 3 4 5 6 Random
Fog of War On Off
Turn Limit 5 6 7 8 9 10
Time Per Turn 3 mins. 5 mins. 10 mins.
Cards On Off
Autohandicap On Off



Draug Knight
LV 1 E 92 Atk 13 Crit 1
HP 20/20 Hit 93 Avo 3
Mov 5 Rng 1
Str 7 –
Mag 0 D
Skill 3 –
Spd 3 –
Lck 1 –
Def 11 –
Res 0 –
E Iron Lance 35/40

START START
B DONE
R TOGGLE

You can pick 0 more. 5/ 5

Marth Frey Jagen
Cain Gordin Draug

Select units to deploy. (R Button: Unit List)

Radiant History

My own association with Marth dates back to the early 1990s, when I was asked to evaluate a tactical RPG for the Famicom (Japan's NES). That game was the original Fire Emblem—its subtitle could be translated as Shadow Dragons and the Blade of Light—and the screen text was in Japanese, leaving me to guess at much of the dialogue and intrigue. Even so, I fell in love with the game's tactical interface and was devastated when I lost key characters that I'd spent so much time building up and commanding in countless battles. I became a fan, but I had to wait 10 years before the series arrived in North America. Shadow Dragon will be the 11th game in the series—and it's my chance to finally learn what happened in the original game I played so long ago. Other Fire Emblem games have since appeared in North America for Game Boy Advance (Fire Emblem and Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones), GameCube (Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance), and Wii (Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn), but none have featured Prince Marth.

Nintendo Power Library Reference Copy
IN THE MARIO PARTY
THE ONLY OFFICIAL SOURCE
NINTENDO POWER
FIRE EMBLEM
A NEW GBA MASTERPIECE!
MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
KIRBY AIR RIDE
METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES
ALSO
DISNEY'S THE HAUNTED MANSION
THE HOBBIT
ONIMUSHA TACTICS

FIRE EMBLEM
Nintendo and Intelligent Systems release a fantastical tactical epic on the Game Boy Advance.
A Long and Fiery Tradition
GAME BOY ADVANCE | FIRE EMBLEM

YOU FOUND THE OCARINA!

Sweet Potato Ocarina **$39.95**
5 holes (octave +1), includes Songbook I/Tutorial/Songs from the Game

Extended Range Sweet Potato **$49.95**
6 holes (octave + 4), includes Extended Range Songbook plus Songbook I/Tutorial/Songs from the Game

Extended Range Sweet Potato XL **$59.95**
Bigger and deeper sounding!

Raku Pendant Ocarina
(with necklace and songbook) **$24.95**

Eagle Bone Flute **$29.95**
(cast in porcelin, simple to play, w/ necklace and playing instruction)

Silk Carrying Case
padded w/ zipper, handle and embroidered dragons
Fits all ocarinas **$5.95**

Ocarina Enchantment CD **$9.95**
Available for download only from our website

Wishbone Flute **$29.95**
Musical wishes bring
horse tail swishes!
Express your elf!
5" long Songbook included.

Extra Ocarina Songbooks - $2.95 ea
Songbook II, Christmas Carols, Beatles for Extended Range

SHIPPING INFO

Shipping & Handling $6 (2-3 weeks for delivery)
PRIORITY Shipping $12 (2-7 biz days for delivery)
We ship via US Postal Service

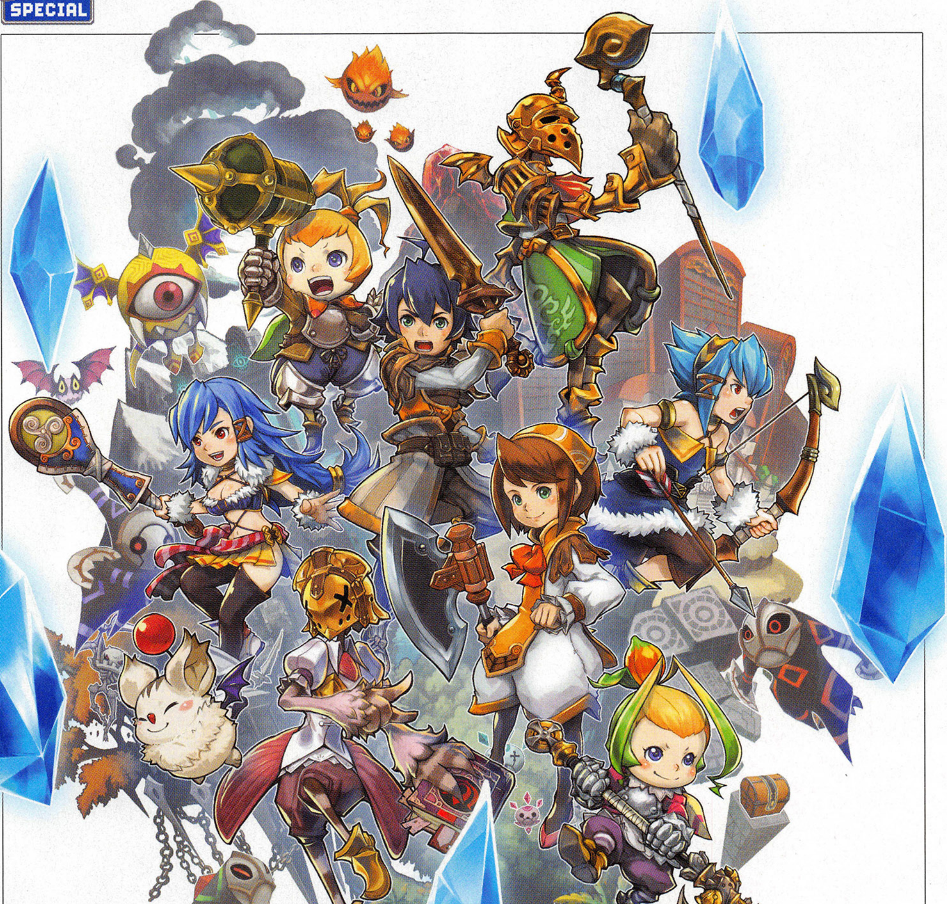
Order via our Website or call Toll Free! 1-866-899-4046

- Easy To Play
- Ceramic Flute
- Songbook/Tutorial Included
- Minuets, Serenades, Requiems
- Handmade in U.S.A.

Songbird Ocarinas

2751 East 11th St. Los Angeles, CA 90023
www.songbirdocarina.com

Songbird Ocarina's not affiliated or endorsed by Nintendo of America, Inc.



TWO *of a* KIND

Now both Wii and DS gamers can share the action-RPG experience in Square Enix's latest four-player adventure, **Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time**.

BY JUSTIN CHENG

While competition is certainly entertaining, it's sometimes even more enjoyable to play with others (see the LEGO titles or games such as Rock Band and Guitar Hero). But RPGs that offer cooperative experiences—outside of the massively multiplayer online subgenre—are still few and far between. Fortunately, RPG master Square Enix has filled that niche rather nicely for the past five years with its Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles series. The latest, Echoes of Time, further evolves the franchise by taking the cooperative concept a step further—now Wii and DS owners can play the action-RPG adventure together.

[Below] You've got to work together to solve the game's many puzzles.

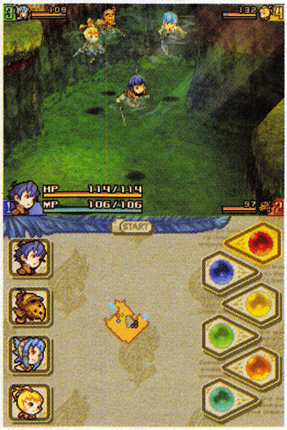
See, the two versions of the game are essentially identical: they use the remote/stylus the same way, they are similar graphically, and they both even use a dual-screen setup. Obviously, you can play on only one television on Wii, but Echoes of Time divides that screen in two: the left is the equivalent of the DS's top screen and the right is the equivalent of the bottom screen. By pressing the - and + Buttons, you can increase the size of the left and right screens, which inversely decreases the size of the opposite screen. Everything else, from attacking/interacting to jumping to picking up objects to using magic, is mapped to the A, B, Z/Y, or C/X buttons, depending on whether you're playing on Wii or DS. No matter which platform you choose, though, the controls are not overly complex, making it easy to dive right into the action.

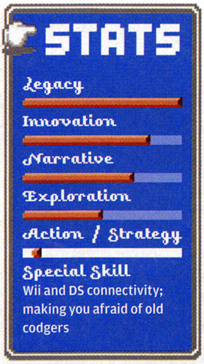
PARTY TIME

And dive in you do, as there's very little in terms of exposition at the outset. The game begins with a cinema of a pink-haired girl who's running toward a crystal in the middle of a forest while being chased by a bespectacled old man wearing a fedora. It's all a dream (or is it?), however, and you awaken to find yourself in the middle of a forest village. You soon discover it's your 16th birthday, meaning it's time for your coming-of-age test: you're tasked with venturing deeper into the forest to find a person named Sherlotta and battling any monsters that get in your way. As it turns out, though, you don't have to face this trial on your own. By interacting with the village's Save Stone, you can invite up to three of your friends to join you via local wireless or Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Having allies is always handy, especially if you create a well-balanced party (see the "Who Are You?" sidebar).

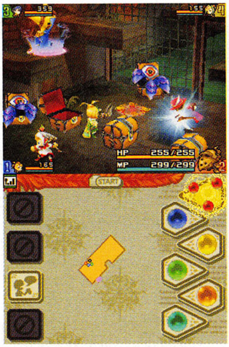
No matter who you have on your team, communication is key to success. But while it's best to have face-to-face communication with your allies by chatting with them in the same room, it's not always possible. Fortunately, Echoes of Time has preset phrases that are quickly accessible with a few taps of the stylus/remote. "Let's use magic!" "Let's do a quest!" and "Changing equipment" are just some of the things you can relay to your cohorts,

[Above] Sherlotta may look like your average cat-tailed girl, but there's more to her than meets the eye.





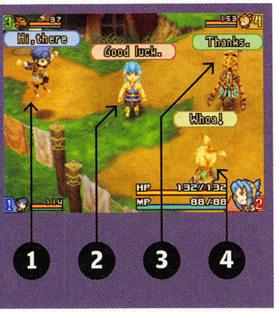
Special Skill
Wii and DS connectivity; making you afraid of old codgers



There are six magic spells to choose from (lined on the right side of the touch screen): Fire, Blizzard, Thunder, Cure, Raise, Clear.

WHO ARE YOU?

Like in the previous Crystal Chronicles games, there are four different races to choose from: Clavat, Yuke, Selkie, and Lilty. Each race has its own advantages, so you can play as you like. The sword-swinging Clavats (1) are an all-around balanced race, able to use both physical and magical attacks competently but excelling at neither. The paddle-toting Selkies (2) are the most agile race; they're the only ones that can double-jump at all times. The wand-waving Yukes (3) are much more magic-focused than physical, but the spear-thrusting Lilties (4) are exactly the opposite.

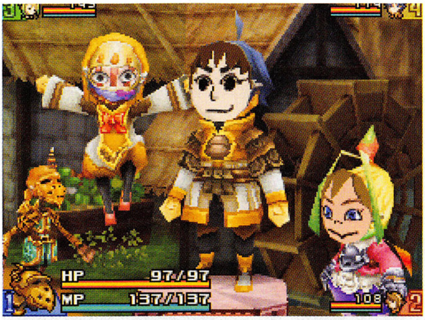


but you can also create 12 of your own phrases then associate one of 15 animations with each one. For example, you could write a simple, to-the-point "Help!" and have your character wave his or her arms to let your buddies know you're in dire need of assistance. Or if you have something else to say (nothing rude, though; that's just uncalled for), you can communicate via the in-game keyboard. Just make sure you're not in the middle of battle when you're doing so—you can never pause the action.

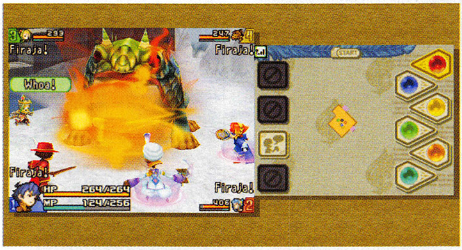
THE HEROES' JOURNEY

Once your party is ready to roll, you start your search for Sherlotta. This first quest eases you into the game's mechanics, giving you the basics of puzzle-solving (lift a piece of stone and place it onto a pedestal to open a door, for instance). There are also plentiful monsters to fight, and you can earn items and experience points for both yourself and your equipment. Just don't let anything go to waste: every little bit of gil (Echoes of Time's currency) or raw materials helps you get better equipment. Monsters may also drop fruit and vegetables, which you can pick up to instantly replenish your MP and HP. (Since you can't store healing items, you should take the fruits and vegetables only when you need them; but don't leave them unclaimed, because they will disappear after a while.) Once you've defeated this forest area's boss (a giant robot) and reached your goal, you discover Sherlotta is—surprise!—the same girl from your dream, albeit in different clothes. She sits on top of a huge blue crystal, which, as you soon discover, is the last crystal in the world. Considering that the world was once filled with crystal-powered devices that died out when the crystals disappeared, this huge crystal—called the Crystal Core—is vitally important to both the world and the narrative.

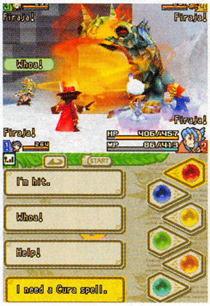
Having such a large crystal in such close proximity to the village comes at a price, however: a girl named Eryll soon falls ill with crystal sickness, and getting the medicine means leaving the village. The only problem is that for some reason only you and Sherlotta are allowed to leave. So off you go to the neighboring town, where you discover item and equipment-customization shops, as well as a variety of colorful characters who give you information about new quests and areas. There are also mercenaries you can hire if you need some supplemental



While there are no actual Miis in the game, you can unlock some masks.



No matter how big the boss is, DS and Wii gamers can combine their powers to take it down.



I'm hit.

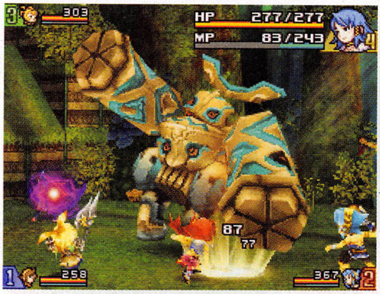
Whoa!

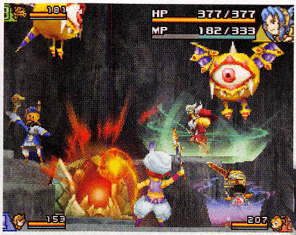
Help!

I need a Cura spell.

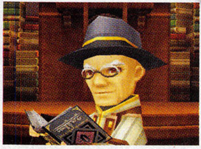
RPG CLICHÉ CHECKLIST

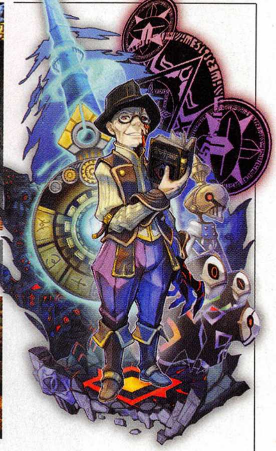
- ☐ Spiky-haired protagonist
- ☑ Earnest/clueless female lead
- ☐ Amnesia a key plot point
- ☐ Events foretold by prophecy
- ☐ Random battles
- ☑ Orphaned party members
- ☐ Airship travel
- ☑ Underage heroes
- ☑ Technology is evil





[Below] Would you trust this seemingly helpful old man? You really shouldn't.





muscle, and side quests to take if you want extra rewards. Scratch Cards—Lotto-style game cards that monsters drop occasionally—can also be redeemed in town: after successfully completing the touch-centric minigame (for instance, using your stylus/remote to scratch only the square icons in 20 seconds), you can use the Scratch Card to unleash a temporary effect such as giving every member of your party the ability to double-jump.

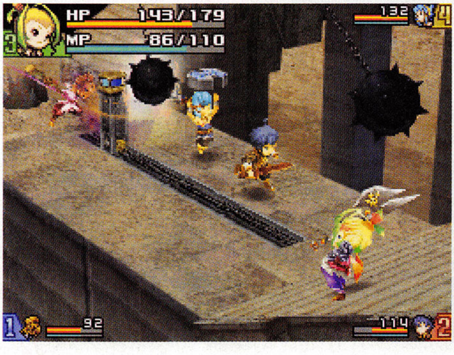
Still, you're not in town to sightsee; there's a girl who needs your help. After chatting with the townsfolk, you learn about an old man in the town's library who's an expert on ancient crystal-powered technology. This archaeologist with the German accent is named Larkeicus, and he's the old man from your dream. He seems friendly enough and is willing to make the medicine—once you find your way through a water-logged dungeon (don't worry; your whole party can swim) to secure the essential ingredient (a Buffasaur horn)—but there's something more sinister lying beneath the surface, as you discover by the time you've completed Larkeicus's tasks…or by paying attention to your dream at the beginning of the game.

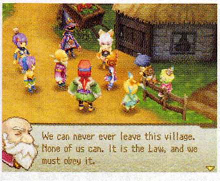
SHARING IS CARING

Before you set off to fetch the horn, you have a party to tend to. If you're playing by yourself, you can visit a stall in town where you can add AI-controlled buddies to your crew. Just like when you created your own character, you decide each person's name, race, and gender. Of course, having more party members means you'll have to buy more equipment to outfit them with, so you must budget your funds accordingly. And although you can set the AI behavior—from "Just Follow Me" to "Go Nuts with Magic"—it doesn't come close to the fun of having real human buddies at your side. The AI just isn't nearly as helpful as it should be no matter what setting you use; characters often stand around while you're fighting for your life.

Thankfully you can swap characters with the tap of an icon if a character is out of commission, but it's still far better to get some real people to fight alongside you, whether they are your friends or random people from across the globe. Sure, you may all end up racing around the battlefield, selfishly grabbing all of the items and money strewn about before the others get to it, but you can also devise tactics to take down some particularly tough dungeon bosses. You can stack magic, for example, increasing the effect of a Fire spell by having two people cast it on the same target at the same time while the other players keep the remaining monsters busy.

And playing with other people means you can experience the story together, uncovering the mysteries of Sherlotta and the village, as well as Larkeicus and the crystals, in between all of the fighting. You won't find any spoilers here; you'll have to wait until Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time is released in the spring.





We can never ever leave this village. None of us can. It is the Law, and we must obey it.

[Above] Why can't the residents leave the village? That's another question the game will answer.

THE STORY THUS FAR

In an effort to provide a more accessible Final Fantasy experience to Nintendo-platform owners, famed RPG-smiths Square Enix developed the Final Fantasy-spin-off Crystal Chronicles franchise. The multi-player- and action-focused series began in 2004 on GameCube with Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles. That game's inventive control scheme allowed players to use a Game Boy Advance as a controller during multiplayer sessions, so players could customize their characters without pausing the action for everyone else. Now Square Enix is translating the idea of inter-platform connectivity to Wii and DS in the fourth Crystal Chronicles game, Echoes of Time.

23

Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
March 21, 1959

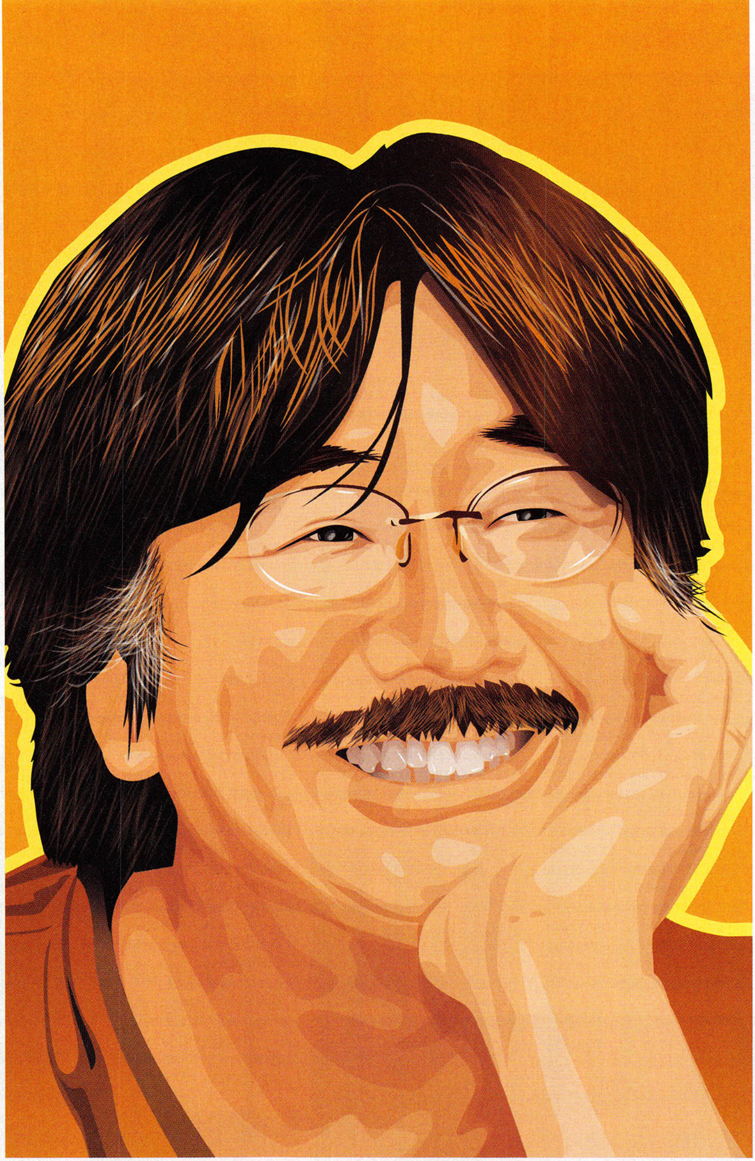
BIRTHPLACE
Kochi Prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Music Composer/ President of Smile Please and Dog Ear Records

BEST KNOWN FOR
Composing the music of the Final Fantasy series, being a super 'stache brother with Hironobu Sakaguchi

FAVORITE FOOD
Curry and rice; meat

CURRENT PROJECTS
Blue Dragon Plus, other secret projects



Nobuo Uematsu

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES
(BASED ON PHOTO BY SHINJIRO YAMADA)

Just as the *Star Wars* movies wouldn't be complete without their rousing John Williams soundtracks, the Final Fantasy series wouldn't be whole without the stirring musical compositions of Nobuo Uematsu. Emotional and powerful despite their 8-bit limitations, Uematsu's tunes for the original Final Fantasy helped cement the franchise's success and have provided players with some of the most renowned music in video games. Uematsu's works do more than enhance an interactive adventure; they are compelling enough to stand on their own in countless albums, and have been performed by some of the world's greatest orchestras, as well as by Uematsu himself, who occasionally plays rock versions of the predominantly classical tunes with his band, The Black Mages. Although Uematsu left Final Fantasy publisher Square Enix in 2004 to form an independent company called Smile Please, he continues to create captivating game music, much to the delight of RPG fans everywhere.

NINTENDO POWER
When did you become interested in music? How did that evolve into a career for you?

NOBUO UEMATSU
My interest in music was sparked when I was in the third grade; I remember hearing the Vienna Boys' Choir and being blown away. Later when I was in fifth and sixth grade I started listening to late-night radio broadcasts, and that's pretty much what got me set on music. All of the Western pop music they played really opened my eyes, and I remember thinking, "If I had my own band, I could do this, too."

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

An Olympic gymnast.

What instruments do you play, and which is your favorite?

I play a lot of different instruments, but just to name a few, I play things like the guitar, violin, and recorder, in addition to the piano. At the moment I'm really into the organ.

How did you first become involved in the video game industry?

To be honest, that was pretty much the only work available at the time.

What difficulties did you face when you were first starting out? Was it challenging to cope with the restrictions of 8-bit sound capabilities?

It wasn't all that difficult. Actually, working within a set of restrictions is what makes it fun; you really start to explore what those parameters allow you to create.

What game-music composition has been the most memorable experience for you and why?

I can't say that any one game really stands out for me, but even now there are times when a deadline's coming up and I have nightmares where I panic and think, "I'm nowhere near finished yet."

How much of the game do you get to see beforehand?

Generally when I'm asked to handle the music the game is still in development, so I basically draw upon whatever character art and scenario info they give me and work from there.

How has your musical style changed since the 8- and 16-bit days?

I don't think it's really changed. I pretty much write music now just as I did when I was a kid.

We've heard some people complain that, in general, game music has become more dull as sound technology has evolved. What do you think the key is to composing compelling music on modern hardware?

New technology aside, I feel the key thing is to create a driving melody that really speaks to your audience.

How has the video game industry changed during the time you've been involved with it?

The only thing that's changed is that I've gotten older and can't pull all-nighters like I used to.

Why did you choose the name Smile Please for your company?

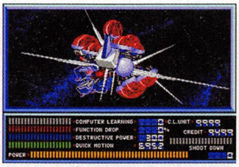
Personally, I just really like to smile, and I love comedy as well. On top of that, I am huge Stevie Wonder fan. On the first album of his that I bought, *Fullingness' First Finale*, I absolutely love the first song, which happens to be called "Smile Please."

How are things different now that you're running your own independent company? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages?

The job description is pretty much the same, as I am still writing music. The

GAMEOGRAPHY

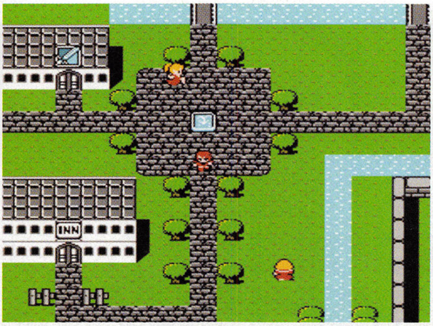
Given Uematsu's close ties to the franchise, it's no surprise that Final Fantasy titles make up a large chunk of his résumé. He's contributed in one way or another to every main entry in the series.



CRUISE CHASER BLASSTY
1986, PC
COMPOSER

TIME
088 KM/H
SCORE
018
S
6
01093

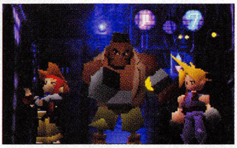
RAD RACER
1987, NES
COMPOSER



FINAL FANTASY
1990, NES
COMPOSER

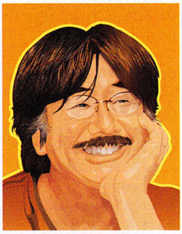
D.M
Fight
Jump
Item
Kain
Cecil
115/ 190
76/ 200

FINAL FANTASY II
(FINAL FANTASY IV IN JAPAN)
1991, SUPER NES
COMPOSER



FINAL FANTASY VII
1997, PLAYSTATION
COMPOSER

Power Profiles



biggest difference is that I don't have to wake up so early anymore, not that I am complaining, though.

How did you end up composing the theme for Super Smash Bros. Brawl? Was there anything unique about working on that game?
I was at a party one night and happened to run into [Super Smash Bros. Brawl director] Mr. [Masahiro] Sakurai. He came up to me and asked, "Would you mind composing the theme?" to which I said "Sure!" That's really how it all started.

There really wasn't anything different in my approach to the composition, but the great thing was that they were really open to my suggestions, such as "I'd like to use a chorus," and, "I think it'd be cool to have the lyrics in Latin." That's what made working on the theme such a blast; they pretty much let me do it the way I wanted.

Are there any existing game franchises out there that you think it would be fun to compose music for?
I'd like to on work on a game featuring experimental music. I can't think of any *specific* game that I'm dying to make music for. Since most of what I've done throughout my career has been relatively straightforward, I'd like to shake things up a bit and try to compose something different.

Do you have a particular favorite song or soundtrack you've composed?
I have a bunch of favorites. But if I had to name one, it'd be the crowd-pleaser for any concert, "Aerith's Theme."

Who are some of your musical influences?
Though pretty much all of the artists and music I've ever heard have had an impact on me, I would say the most influential is definitely rock. Artists such as The Beatles, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, the Carpenters; basically anything that was popular in the '70s.

Video games are one of the few places that can popularize classical music. What does that mean to you as a fan of that genre?
Not many young people are going to rush out and head to a concert if they're only playing classical music. But video games provide a way to expose them to orchestral music, getting them to sit back and think, "Man, I never realized how incredible the orchestra really sounds." Once they know that, then I feel they're ready to enter the world of the greats, such as Beethoven and Brahms. I guess in that respect, video games are the perfect bridge for passing on to the next generation this incredible tradition of orchestral music, a rich legacy that stretches back hundreds of years.

How did the formation of The Black Mages come about? Do you enjoy getting the opportunity to play in front of an audience?
While the Final Fantasy music had already been arranged for orchestral performance, it had never undergone a rock interpretation. So, I decided to form The Black Mages and give it a try. It's a lot of fun to just rock out in front of a crowd.

You recently composed the theme for AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon, for DS. How does it feel to return to programming on internal sound hardware after so many years of composing for CD-based games?
As I mentioned before, when working with internal sound hardware you run into a set of restrictions, and the real fun is exploring what you can do within those parameters.

When you reach a roadblock while composing a tune, what's your process for working through it?
I look to others for input.

Do you play games for fun? Do you play music games?
To be honest, I don't really have much time for games these days. I've got the Wii, PS3, and Xbox 360, but unfortunately I just can't find the time to play.

What games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I really admire and envy all the game creators I've ever worked with; all of their work has an allure that [my work] just [doesn't] have.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
It's really tough to name any one in particular; there are just too many.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I've been working so much lately that I haven't really had a chance to watch a movie. I'd love to kick back and enjoy a nice film.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
It may not be a superpower, but I'd love to make my own 24-hour nonstop comedy TV station.

GAMEOGRAPHY

FINAL FANTASY IX
2000, PLAYSTATION
COMPOSER

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
2008, Wii
MAIN THEME COMPOSER

AWAY: SHUFFLE DUNGEON
2008, DS
MAIN THEME COMPOSER

BLUE DRAGON PLUS
2009, DS
COMPOSER

dish NETWORK

Best Offer Ever!

Call Today For The Lowest Price Nationwide!

Call Now

$19.99

For over 40 family friendly channels

Make the Switch

$450 Sign up bonus!*

Over 100 High Definition Channels Available on

TURBOHD™
by DISH NETWORK

FREE
DVR OR HD DVR
EQUIPMENT UPGRADE

BEST HD DVR AVAILABLE

America's Top 100
Over 100 favorite channels
$32.99/mo

Hundreds More Available!

Call Right Now
and receive:

- 3 Months Free of HBO & Starz
- 1 Year of Cinemax for a penny
- $50 Credit on your first bill
- $175 More in FREE TV services!

1-877-703-0181

ALTITUDE MARKETING

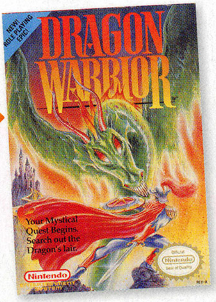
dish NETWORK. AUTHORIZED RETAILER

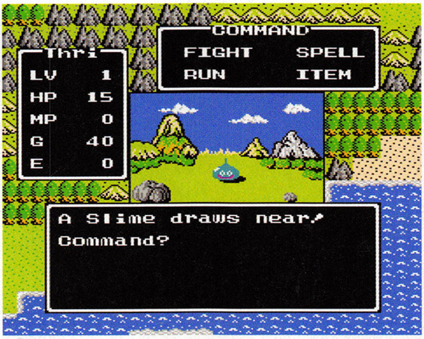
Ad provided by MediaBids.com. 1-866-236-2259.

Offer ends 1/31/09 and is available in the continental United States for new, first-time DISH Network residential customers. All prices, packages and programming subject to change without notice. Local and state sales taxes may apply. Where applicable, equipment rental fees and programming are taxed separately. All DISH Network programming, and any other services that are provided, are subject to the terms and conditions of the promotional agreement and Residential Customer Agreement, available at www.dishnetwork.com or upon request. Local channels available in 175 television markets and 97% of TV households. Social Security Numbers are used to obtain credit scores and will not be released to third parties except for verification and collection purposes only or if required by governmental authorities. All service marks and trademarks belong to their respective owners. *3 Months Free offer: requires participation in Digital Home Advantage with 24-month commitment and qualifying programming, including America's Top 100 or higher, DishLATINO or higher, dishHD package or a select qualifying International package. Customer receives one credit of $50.00 applied to the first month of service. Digital Home Advantage: Requires 24-month qualifying programming purchase, Social Security Number, valid major credit card and credit approval. If qualifying service is terminated prior to end of 24-month period, a cancellation fee equal to the lesser of $240 or $10 per cancelled month of service will apply. Equipment must be returned to DISH Network upon termination of qualifying service. Limit 4 tuners per account. Monthly package price includes an equipment rental fee of $5.00 or $7.00 for first receiver, based on selected model. A monthly equipment rental fee of $5.00 or $7.00 will be charged for each receiver beyond the first, based on selected model. A $5.00/mo. additional outlet programming access fee applies for each dual-tuner receiver; fee will be waived monthly for each such receiver continuously connected to Customer's phone line. HD programming requires HD receiver and HD television (sold separately). Customer must subscribe to qualifying HD programming or a $7.00/mo. HD Enabling fee will apply. Lease upgrade fee may apply for select receivers (based on model). Monthly $5.98 DISH Network DVR Service fee applies for each DVR receiver. New customers are subject to a one-time service and handling fee. *$450 in free programming/sign up bonus breaks down as follows: 3 months of HBO - $44.97 value, 3 months of Starz - $38.97 value, Cinemax for 1 year for $.01 with credit card auto pay with paperless billing - $155.87 value, order HD essentials for $10/mo and receive an upgrade to HD ultimate for $10 off (regularly $20/mo) for 3 months - $30 value. Automatic credit on first invoice $50.00 with AT100 or larger package - $50 value. Free activation - $99 value and 9 months Digital Home Protection Plan - $53.91. Total credits available - $472.72

DRAGON WARRIOR

Whether it's Warrior or Quest, this classic series started a trend.





COMMAND
FIGHT SPELL
RUN ITEM

Thri
LV 1
HP 15
MP 0
G 40
E 0

A Slime draws near!
Command?

"If you strike me down, my merchandising potential shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine."

PLATFORM: **NES**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT/ENIX**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE DATE: **AUGUST 1989**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **6, 7, 8, 9, 11**
PERCENT CHANCE OF NINTENDO POWER HANDING OUT MORE FREE CARTRIDGES: **0**

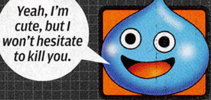
During the 8- and 16-bit eras of gaming, the only RPG series that got any real recognition in the US was Final Fantasy. In Japan, however, Square's beloved franchise had a powerful rival in the form of Enix's Dragon Quest series. Designer Yuji Horii created Dragon Quest with inspiration taken from Western RPGs like Wizardry and Ultima, while the game's distinctive visual style was the work of manga artist Akira Toriyama, the creator of Dragon Ball.

In 1989, three years after its Japanese release, Dragon Quest was released in the US. Due to a pen-and-paper RPG here bearing the name DragonQuest, the game was renamed Dragon Warrior. The game's dialogue is chock-full of ye olden words like "thou" and "hast" (example: "Of GOLD thou hast gained 120"), giving the game the goofy charm of a Renaissance faire and adding to the epic, medieval feel.

The storyline wasn't much. You play as a descendant of a legendary hero tasked with rescuing the kingdom's princess and defeating the evil Dragonlord, who has stolen a powerful artifact called the Ball of Light. To be honest, playing Dragon Warrior these days can be a bit of a chore, as its primitive mechanics and lack of an interesting story make the game drag.

So what's the big deal about Dragon Warrior then? It's all about historical significance. This is the game that is credited with bringing RPGs to consoles (remember that the Japanese version predates Final Fantasy by about a year and a half). Dragon Warrior introduced gamers to the thrill of roaming across vast kingdoms and facing random battles against all sorts of vicious (and sometimes adorable) beasts. It showed us how rewarding it felt to strategize by equipping your knight with the best armor and weapons and knowing when to use brawn or magic to win a fight.

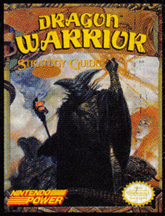
Enix's experiment with a new genre worked, as proven by the popularity of console RPGs to this day and the continued success of the Dragon Quest series and its many spin-offs. —**PHIL T.**


Yeah, I'm cute, but I won't hesitate to kill you.

PLAYING WITH POWER

Nintendo Power has given away a lot of cool things for subscribing to this magazine. Free sets of Player's Guides. Exclusive Smash Bros. and Zelda soundtracks. Poster books. But arguably the coolest thing we've given away is an entire free game. That game was—you guessed it—Dragon Warrior. The subscription freebie didn't come with a box, but hey, how many magazines were giving away free games just for subscribing? TV spots were used to advertise the offer, and around 400,000 new subscribers signed up as a result. In addition to the giveaway, Nintendo Power promoted Dragon Warrior very heavily within its pages. Volume 9 (Nov./Dec. 1989) featured a whopping 36-page pull-out strategy guide!

As evidenced by the heavy promotion and its publishing partnership with Enix, Nintendo definitely wanted to get in on the ground floor of the American RPG craze. Despite such close ties, Nintendo didn't publish the game's three NES sequels, leaving Enix to release them in the US.



HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. **nintendopower@futureus.com**

Protect Your Loved Ones
with Comprehensive Health Insurance

Individual Health Plans for as Low as

$3.00 a day!

Family Health Plans for as Low as

$8.00 a day!

Call 877-705-7373

Get affordable, comprehensive health insurance with one fast, easy phone call.

Mon - Thu 8am - 11pm EST
Fri 8am - 8pm EST
Sat 10am - 6pm EST

- ✓ Top Rated Health Insurance Plans
- ✓ PPO, HMO, and HSA Eligible Plans
- ✓ Affordable Alternative Options

Getinsured

Ad provided by MediaBids.com. 1-866-236-2259.

JOIN *the* FIGHT!

NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
FEBRUARY 2009

FIRE EMBLEM™: SHADOW DRAGON

GRAND PRIZE

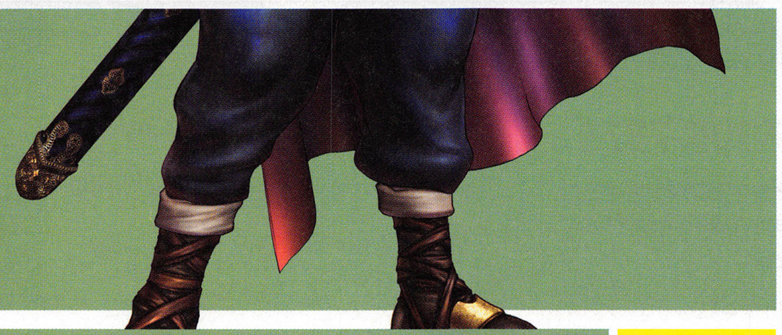
1 WINNER!

Our Grand Prize winner will join Prince Marth in the fight to free the land of Archanea with a copy of Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon, and be equipped with a battle-ready Metallic Silver-colored Nintendo DS™ system!

SECOND PRIZE

5 WINNERS!

Five Second Prize winners will join the fight against tyranny with their own copy of Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon for Nintendo DS, and will experience—for the first time in the US—the original chapter of the Fire Emblem story.



TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 238
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Language

OFFICIAL RULES

1. **NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A PURCHASE WILL NOT IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING.** The sponsor of this contest is Future US, Inc., 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005 ("Sponsor").

2. ELIGIBILITY: Sweepstakes open to legal residents of the United States (excluding residents of Rhode Island and Puerto Rico). Void where prohibited by law. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of the winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries. Employees of Sponsor and employees' household or immediate family members are NOT eligible to enter Sweepstakes.

3. TIMING: Sweepstakes begins at 12:01 a.m. PDT on January 8th, 2009 and continues until 11:59 p.m. PDT on April 1, 2009. Mailed entries must be postmarked by 11:59 p.m. PDT on April 1, 2009 to be eligible. Incomplete or late entries will not be accepted.

4. HOW TO ENTER: A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3x5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes Vol. 238, c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510, Brisbane, CA 94005. Only one entry per person will be accepted. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries.

5. PRIZES AND ODDS: One Grand Prize will be awarded. The Grand Prize will include 1 (one) Nintendo DS™ system, and 1 (one) copy of Fire Emblem™: Shadow Dragon. The Grand Prize has an estimated total retail value of $159.98. Five (5) second place winners will each receive 1 (one) copy of Fire Emblem™: Shadow Dragon, with a retail value of $29.99. Odds of winning shall be determined by the number of eligible entries received. Prizes are nontransferable and must be accepted as awarded. Winner will be responsible for all taxes (federal, state, and local) and all expenses not listed herein related to acceptance and use of any prize.

6. DRAWING: Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries held on or about April 10, 2009. The decision of Sponsors shall be final and binding and within their sole discretion. Winners will be notified by phone or email within ten (10) days of the drawing. You may obtain the name of the winner, within six months of the drawing, by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above (residents of Vermont may omit return postage). Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

7. PRIVACY POLICY: Submissions are subject to standard privacy policy, the terms of which can be found at http://www.futureus.com/privacy.php, which terms and conditions entrants accept and agree to by submission of entries pursuant to these official rules.

8. AFFIDAVIT: The winners will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

9. RELEASE: Sponsor is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Sponsor and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Sponsor reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

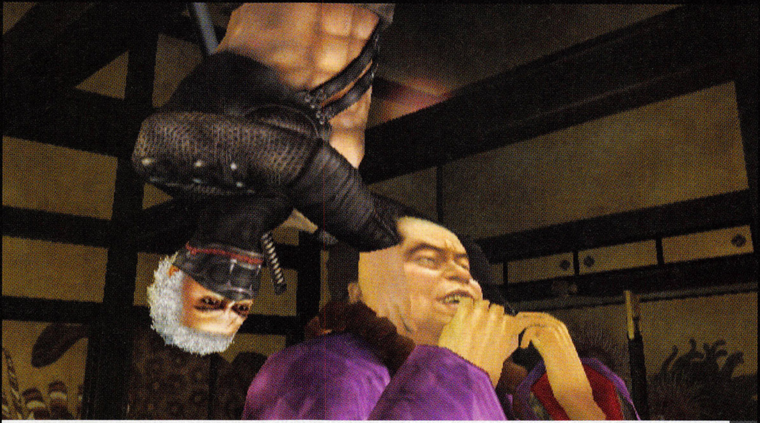
10. LAW: This sweepstakes is governed by the laws of the United States and is subject to all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Void where prohibited or restricted. All issues and questions concerning the construction, validity, interpretation, and enforceability of these Official Rules, or the rights and obligations of entrants or Sponsor in connection with any drawing or award, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with the laws of, the State of California, without regard to conflict of law principles. Any cause of action by you with respect to the offer (and/or any information, products or services related thereto) must be instituted within one (1) year after the cause of action arose or be forever waived and barred. All actions shall be subject to the limitations set forth in above. All legal proceedings arising out of or in connection with the offer of these official rules shall be brought solely in San Mateo County, California. You expressly submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of said courts and consent to extraterritorial service of process.

© 2008 - 2009 Nintendo / INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS. Fire Emblem and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2009 Nintendo.

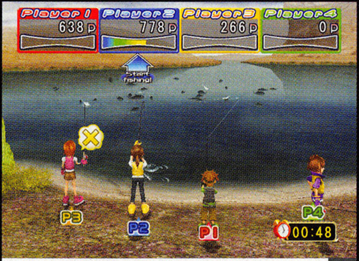
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

Dish out ninja justice in Tenchu: Shadow Assassins, the first big stealth game for Wii.

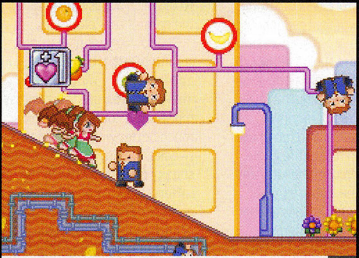


TENCHU: SHADOW ASSASSINS 88



Player1
638p
Player2
778p
Player3
266p
Player4
0p
Start fishing!
P3
P2
P1
P4
00:48

FISHING MASTER: WORLD TOUR 90

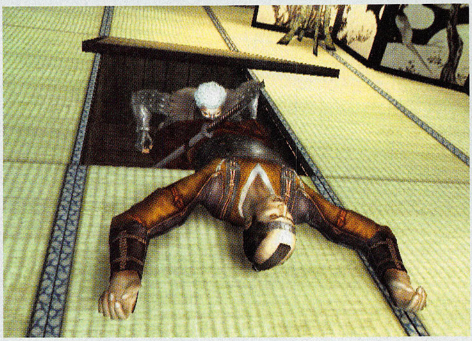


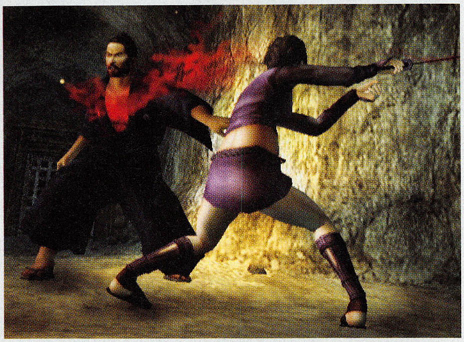
THE CHASE: FELIX MEETS FELICITY 89

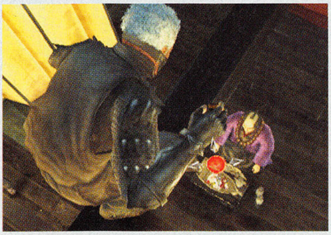
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST 89

LEGACY OF YS: BOOKS I & II 90

The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity 89
Fishing Master: World Tour 90
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II 90
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest 89
NASCAR Kart Racing 90
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins 88







Hide and Seek

TENCHU: SHADOW ASSASSINS

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **ACQUIRE**
ESRB: **MATURE**

The latest installment of the Tenchu series brings ninja-style hide-and-seek to Wii, and although the results are mixed, players wanting a new stealth game—or a brutal Mature-rated adventure—will find that Shadow Assassins scratches both itches satisfyingly enough.

Fans of the series or of stealth games in general will notice something unusual about the combat: there isn't any. Well, that's only mostly true. While the expected third-person fighting has been dropped, getting seen does sometimes trigger a first-person sword duel. It's the weakest part of the game, though, due to frustratingly inaccurate motion controls and enemy attacks that are way too fast to parry. It's a good thing, then, that Shadow Assassins focuses almost exclusively on sneaking around. It's more stealth-puzzle than stealth-action, with the focus on strategically pairing the right moves and items with objects in the environment to move unseen through an area.

Using special stealth-kill moves is often the best way to get past an enemy, and the animators of these over-the-top sequences worked hard to earn the game's Mature rating. Unique and gruesome finishes can be performed while leaping out of a closet, popping out of bushes, hanging from a cliff, jumping out of water, standing in a large pot, reaching out from under a table, hanging upside-down, or turning a corner. Pretty much every kind of hiding place provides its own lethal attack, which adds extra strategic considerations and welcome visceral highlights. Getting the moves to work, however, can be annoying. Each requires a simple gesture or two with the Wii Remote or Nunchuk, but the game has trouble recognizing them. Stabbing the remote forward, for example, works only with a short, quick thrust that is very fast and precise. As satisfying as it is to sneak up to an enemy and take him down, it's equally irritating when your seemingly proper controller movement doesn't work, meaning you get caught and sent back to the start of the area.

Holding down the Z Button activates Ninja Vision, which lets you look around the area from a higher angle. You can't move in this mode, but dark areas and enemies are marked so that you know exactly where safety and danger lie. It's pretty exhilarating to pass unsuspecting guards by rolling from bush to bush, running through a shadowy alley, crawling under a porch, or swimming underwater. Each stage is like a big obstacle course with multiple ways for creative players to get through. Many light sources can be destroyed, doused, or blown out, which creates new shadows to hide in and totally reshapes how you can play a level.

The overall number of ninja tools isn't bad, but you most commonly find rocks, bamboo poles (for dousing torches), throwing stars, and swords. The most useful or exotic items—such as smoke bombs and the Ninja Veil, which lets you hide in plain sight—are few and far between. The one exception is the Shinobi Cat, which is frequent and fun to use in the second half of the game. You take control of the kitty and prowl the area, using its night vision to spot ambushes and its teeth to carry found items.

Shadow Assassins features the series' longtime protagonists Rikimaru and Ayame; the only real differences between the two are stealth-kill animations and a negligible variance in strength and speed. Each has a certain charisma that makes it worthwhile to watch the ho-hum plot unfold in Story mode, but it's disappointing that their stories are told in separate chunks—that is, you play the first half of the game as Rikimaru and the second as Ayame. Alternating them would've kept things fresher. The game's only other mode is Assignments, which offers quick stand-alone challenges that pair enemies and areas from Story mode with varied tasks. You can unlock 50 assignments, the first 10 of which act as a tutorial for the game's core elements.

Shadow Assassins is a solid stealth title that can be both fun and frustrating, a mix of truly impressive features and clumsy missteps. It could've been so much better with a few control tweaks, but any game that lets sneaky ninjas crawl up in the rafters, hide under a moving carriage, and swing from tree branch to tree branch over a rushing river is worth checking out. —**CHRIS SL.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT RPG WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE GET A SEQUEL?

Justin Cheng

Panzer Dragoon Saga. Sega could bundle the sequel with the original game, too, allowing everyone to experience the awesomeness.

Chris Hoffman

The answer is easy: Lunar. And I want a real Lunar 3 that's a worthy successor. Bring back the original dev team and forget the DS Lunar ever happened!

Casey Loe

As psyched as I am about Phantasy Star 0, I won't be satisfied until that 0 is a 5. It's been a decade, Sega—how much longer must I wait?!

Chris Shepperd

Despite inspiring a whole range of top titles, Super Mario RPG has never received the sequel love. Time for Super Mario RPG 2: Geno's Revenge.

George Sinfield

I'd like to see GBA shooter-RPG Sigma Star Saga return. WayForward proved their DS mettle with Contra 4. Now, they can get back to their passion project.

Chris Slate

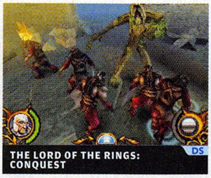
I want a sequel to the old TurboGrafx16 sports-RPG World Court Tennis—the last match was against the devil!

David F. Smith

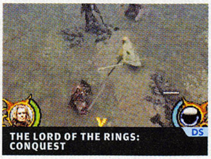
Since Valkyrie Profile's already on the way, I'd like to see something from the Shin Megami Tensei series—a portable Persona, perhaps.

Steve Thomason

I can say without hesitation that I would gladly give up a kidney for a true sequel to Lunar developed by Game Arts and Studio Alex. OK, I'll throw in a lung too!



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

RATING: **5.0**

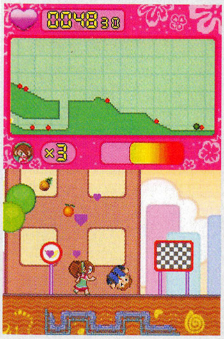
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **PANDEMIC**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

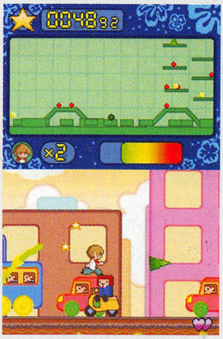
There's nothing wrong with this game's concept, but it doesn't seem that Conquest was designed with the DS in mind. The latest adaptation of The Lord of the Rings is a complex action-strategy hybrid—like Dynasty Warriors with some Battlefield thrown in—and it's a bit more than the DS was meant to handle.

On paper, Conquest seems like a great idea. Depending on your perspective, it's either a fast-moving, small-scale RTS game or a top-down hack-and-slash action game with lots of strategy elements thrown in. You can pick from several different classes for the main player character, including archers and mages and sword-swinging warriors, and that main character leads troops of AI-controlled soldiers to take over control points and achieve other objectives.

As it stands, though, the game has too many technical hurdles to overcome. The framerate collapses when more than a few fighters appear onscreen, and the low texture detail makes it hard to pick out what's going on anyway. The Lord of the Rings trilogy looked great in a movie theater, but its art direction doesn't translate well to a tiny screen—all those shades of brown and gray dissolve into one big muddy puddle of confusion. As good as the DS may be, there are some things it just wasn't built for.

—DAVID S.





Running on Empty

THE CHASE: FELIX MEETS FELICITY

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **RAZORBACK DEVELOPMENTS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

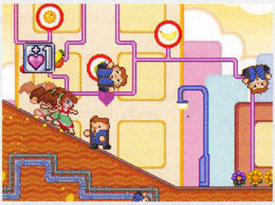
I was ready to welcome with open arms a spiritual successor to Kirby: Canvas Curse. (I was addicted to that draw-your-own-platform romp for weeks, enjoying all of the puzzle elements and creative level design.) The Chase was going to scratch the two-year itch that I'd built up. Unfortunately, my hopes could hardly have been dashed more thoroughly. Despite (or because of) the similar mechanics between the two games, the inevitable comparison to the Kirby classic puts The Chase into an awful light.

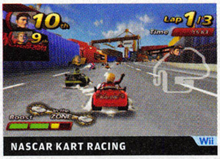
It's the classic story of boy meets girl, then one must run through construction sites and subway tunnels to reunite with the other by gliding across imaginary lines and crashing into bystanders. You get to choose whether to play as the boy or the girl, though it has no apparent bearing on the game; the somewhat charming story changes in the expected ways, but that's all. Additionally, the drawing system is not nearly sophisticated enough—you'll spend most of your time staring at the screen, wondering why your young lover won't follow the path. Compound that with a totally unpredictable jump mechanic, and you'll seldom get from a level's beginning to its end without wanting to rip your DS in half. The level design is dreadfully boring—only a few mazelike sections break the monotony, and even these stretches serve more to annoy than anything else, due to the aggravating play controls.

To make matters even more frustrating, a ludicrous save system punishes you mercilessly for trying to be daring. There's no value in going after an elusive reward or replaying a level—instead, you'll often be penalized for your efforts.

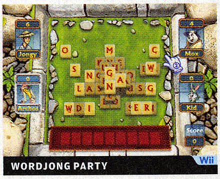
Fans of Kirby: Canvas Curse, keep your fingers crossed for a better successor.

—CHRIS SH.

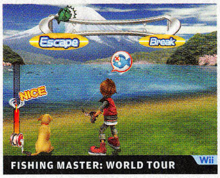




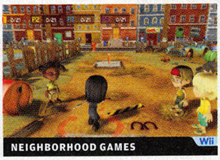
NASCAR KART RACING



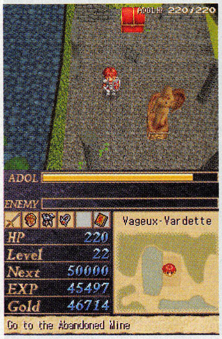
WORDJONG PARTY

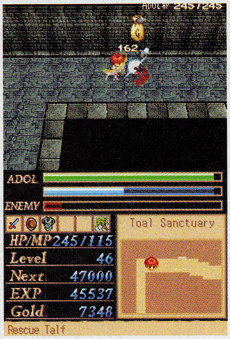


FISHING MASTER: WORLD TOUR



NEIGHBORHOOD GAMES





NASCAR KART RACING

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **EA SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It's not about to bump Mario Kart from the pole position, but NASCAR Kart Racing is a surprisingly solid effort. The game's big hook is a Slingshot maneuver in which you and an AI-controlled partner car essentially draft to fuel each other's boost gauge. (Shake 'n' bake, baby!) This lends the racing a unique tempo, and in the typically stale kart genre, such deviations from the norm are always welcome. Unfortunately, no other aspect of the game truly excels. The track designs and power-ups are pretty standard stuff, and the presentation is about average for a Wii title. None of it is egregiously bad, but if as much effort had gone into the rest of NASCAR Kart Racing as went into the core mechanic, we might have gotten something better than solid. **—STEVE T.**

FISHING MASTER: WORLD TOUR

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

More fishing-themed video game than realistic sim, Hudson's quick follow-up to Fishing Master has more of everything than its predecessor: more locations, more fish, and more bait and equipment. And the basic gameplay is about the same. Send out your hook with a flick of the wrist, wait a few seconds, and you're bound to get a bite. Bringing the fish in requires some finesse and often a bit of a fight as you swing the remote side-to-side. Some fish seem bound and determined to snap the line even if you're not attempting to reel them in, which is a somewhat frustrating occurrence. Fishing quests, tournaments, seven worldwide regions, fish boss battles, and a Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-enabled leaderboard keep this fish fresh for a while, but ultimately the game is more of a deep lake than a vast ocean. **—GEORGE S.**

ALSO THIS MONTH

Some of our recently reviewed titles received unexpected delays. Mastiff's **Moon** for DS should be out now, and Tecmo's **Rygar: The Battle of Argus** for Wii lands in early February.... Call your friends and tell them to bring over their dictionaries. A multiplayer version of Destineer's word-spelling puzzle game has hit Wii in the form of **WordJong Party**.... You can challenge big-headed kids to games of basketball, lawn darts, and more in THQ's **Neighborhood Games** for Wii, but the controls aren't quite up to the task.... Electronic Arts's **SimAnimals** for Wii and DS combines the lifestyle simulation of The Sims with a forest full of plants and animals.... If you prefer the creepy side of nature, THQ's **Deadly Creatures** for Wii provides a unique action-adventure game that casts you as a tarantula and a scorpion. The sights and sounds certainly impress.

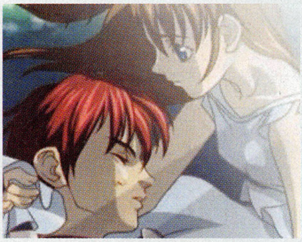
Born-Again Christin

LEGACY OF YS: BOOKS I & II

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **NIHON FALCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Think of Legacy of Ys as going to history class—only it's a lot more exciting and the only "tests" you take involve putting protagonist Adol Christin through his paces by solving puzzles and beating the heck out of bad guys. This is an action-RPG in its purest form; the story is straightforward, the sword-swinging combat is basic yet fun, and the most complex mechanics you'll encounter are item and magic use. Comprising Ys Books I & II, this DS remake of the classic Ys titles surpasses the vintage versions (readily available on Virtual Console) in just about every respect. More content, a vastly improved user interface, new control options (I prefer pressing a button to slash enemies, but you can opt for a touch-controlled method and ram enemies like in the old days), and an all-new localization help bring these 20-plus-year-old games in line with today's standards. Though the games are much more user-friendly than they were originally, they're still very old-school in their design; there's a lot of backtracking and loads of required level-grinding, and despite the inclusion of an in-game map, you can get lost in some of the more complicated dungeons. And although the visuals have been given a 3-D facelift, they're easily the weakest part of the title; textures repeat frequently and some of the environments are extremely blocky. At least the anime intro is gorgeous and the music still rocks. Not everyone will appreciate Legacy of Ys's retro charms, but if you're looking for a solid adventure not bogged down by needless convolution, this one fits the bill. **—CHRIS H.**



SEE HOW COMICSBLIPS
BRINGS YOU THE LATEST
INSIDER NEWS AND RUMORS:
WWW.COMICSBLIPS.COM/DEMO

COMICS blips
WWW.COMICSBLIPS.COM

GET ON THE INSIDE
Immerse yourself in the personalities and back-stories behind your favorite characters.

DEEPER COMICS COVERAGE
Get one-stop access to the hottest stories from all the best comics sites, large & small.

SHARE, CONNECT, DISCUSS
Expand your knowledge and make friends in a community of comics fanatics like you.

COMICSBLIPS.COM
COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INSIGHTS, NEWS AND RUMORS.

[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

Storm before the Calm

After two consecutive months of nonstop gaming, we were finally able to take a breather last issue, as we reviewed only 13 games. Considering that most of the major titles were already released in the preceding months, that's not all that surprising. There were a couple of standouts, of course: Rock Band 2 on Wii (9.0) and Big Bang Mini on DS (8.5).

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Alone in the Dark	4.0	Atari	232	M
• Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Backyard Baseball '09	N/A	Atari	231	E
Baroque	3.0	Atlus	227	T
Battle of the Bands	7.0	THQ	228	T
Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy	8.5	Majesco	229	E
Boogie SuperStar	7.0	Electronic Arts	235	E10+
Boom Blox	8.0	Electronic Arts	229	E
Brothers in Arms: Double Time	7.0	Ubisoft	235	M
Bully: Scholarship Edition	8.5	Rockstar	227	T
• Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
Castle of Shikigami III	7.0	Aksys	228	T
Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
Celebrity Sports Showdown	4.5	EA Sports	235	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	T
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	8.0	Konami	234	E10+
de Blob	8.0	THQ	234	E
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	7.0	Eidos	230	T
Deca Sports	N/A	Hudson	229	E
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	7.0	THQ	227	T
Dokapon Kingdom	8.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	SouthPeak	228	E10+
Emergency Heroes	N/A	Ubisoft	230	E10+
Emergency Mayhem	N/A	Codemasters	228	T
FaceBreaker K.O. Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	235	T
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	7.5	System 3	233	E
FIFA Soccer 09 All-Play	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	7.5	Square Enix	231	E10+
• Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	7.0	RedOctane	232	T
• Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	6.5	Natsume	233	E
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return	7.0	Sega	227	M
The Incredible Hulk	3.5	Sega	231	T
Iron Man	5.5	Sega	229	T
The King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	8.0	SNK Playmore	235	T
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.0	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E10+
Line Rider 2: Unbound	5.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	6.5	Konami	235	E10+
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
• Madden NFL 09 All-Play	9.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
• Mario Kart Wii	9.0	Nintendo	228	E
Mario Super Sluggers	7.5	Nintendo	233	E
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	6.5	Aksys	228	E
MLB 2K8	6.5	2K Sports	227	E
MLB Power Pros 2008	7.0	2K Sports	232	E
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Kingdom	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	8.0	Tomy	235	T
• NBA Live 09 All-Play	4.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
NCAA Football 09 All-Play	5.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	N/A	Capcom	236	E
NHL 2K9	7.0	2K Sports	234	E10+
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Obscure: The Aftermath	7.0	Ignition	227	M
Octomania	N/A	Conspiracy	227	E
Okami	7.5	Capcom	228	T
Opoona	7.0	Koei	227	E10+
Order Up!	7.0	Zoo Games	232	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	7.5	Crave	227	E10+
Pop Star Guitar	N/A	XS Games	236	T
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
• Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Rock Band	8.0	MTV Games	231	T
• Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 1	6.5	MTV Games	232	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 2	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Revolution	4.5	Konami	235	T
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Sam & Max Season One	7.0	The Adventure Company	233	T
• Samba de Amigo	9.0	Sega	234	E
Sega Bass Fishing	5.0	Sega	227	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E10+
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimCity Creator	6.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	8.5	SNK Playmore	233	T
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E10+
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
SPRay	3.0	Tecmo	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	7.5	LucasArts	233	T
Summer Sports: Paradise Island	3.5	Destineer	228	E
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Target: Terror	N/A	Konami	227	M
• Tiger Woods PGA Tour All-Play	8.5	Electronic Arts	233	E
TNA Impact!	5.0	Midway	235	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Top Spin 3	7.0	2K Sports	229	E
Ultimate Band	6.0	Disney	235	E
Ultimate Shooting Collection	N/A	UFO	237	E
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
Wario Land: Shake It!	8.0	Nintendo	234	E
We Cheer	6.0	Namco Bandai	235	E10+
• We Love Golf!	8.5	Capcom	231	E10+
We Ski	6.0	Namco Bandai	229	E
• Wii Music	N/A	Nintendo	235	E
Wild Earth: African Safari	N/A	Majesco	228	E
Worms: A Space Oddity	6.0	THQ	227	E10+
• WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T
NINTENDO DS				
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Arkanoid DS	6.5	Square Enix	230	E

REVIEWER NOTES

EXIT DS

Despite the less-than-stellar scores that some reviewers gave this offbeat title, I was pleasantly surprised by its addictive bits of bite-sized puzzle solving, which center on finding escape routes from burning buildings. The stylus controls are a little imprecise at times, but the game makes up for it with lots of style. —**CHRIS SL.**

METAL SLUG 7

The first numbered Metal Slug built for a system other than the NeoGeo, part seven ably carries on the series tradition of high-caliber (if not particularly innovative) run-'n'-gun action.

—STEVE T.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD'S ZOMBIE BBQ

I have to disagree with George on this one. Zombie BBQ is pretty one-note in nature, but when that one note consists of blowing aware hordes of zombies amidst slick anime-style graphics and it costs less than $20, it's definitely worth playing. Though the controls could be a tad better (I often threw grenades by accident), shooter fans should check it out. —**CHRIS H.**

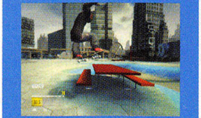
AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon	7.0	Majesco	235	E10+
Bangai-O Spirits	8.0	D3PA	232	E10+
Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E
Bleach: Dark Souls	8.5	Sega	234	T
Brain Quest Grades 3 & 4	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Quest Grades 5 & 6	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Voyage	N/A	Eidos	228	E
Cake Mania 2	6.5	Majesco	230	E
• Call of Duty: World at War	N/A	Activision	236	T
Carnival Games	4.5	2K Games	231	E
• Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	8.0	Konami	235	T
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	E10+
Chrono Trigger	9.0	Square Enix	236	E10+
Civilization Revolution	7.5	2K Games	231	E10+
Code Lyoko: Fall of Xana	N/A	The Game Factory	230	E
Commando: Steel Disaster	N/A	XS Games	229	E10+
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E
Crosswords DS	N/A	Nintendo	228	E
Disgaea DS	7.5	NIS America	233	T
Dragon Ball: Origins	7.0	Atari	235	E
Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen	7.5	Square Enix	233	E10+
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob Squarepants Edition	7.0	THQ	234	E
Dream Pinball 3D	N/A	SouthPeak	228	E10+
Drone Tactics	7.0	Atlus	229	E10+
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	7.0	Konami	237	E
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	8.5	Atlus	230	E10+
Exit DS	7.5	Square Enix	234	E
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	6.0	System 3	233	E
Final Fantasy IV	9.0	Square Enix	231	E10+
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift	7.0	Square Enix	230	E10+
Gauntlet	7.5	Eidos	236	T
• GRID	8.5	Codemasters	230	E
Guitar Hero On Tour	8.0	Activision	232	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	7.0	Activision	237	E10+
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	7.0	Natsume	231	E
The Incredible Hulk	7.5	Sega	231	E10+
Iron Man	5.0	Sega	229	E10+
Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns	5.0	Atlus	232	T
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	5.0	Aksys	229	T
Kirby Super Star Ultra	9.0	Nintendo	234	E
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Kage 2	8.0	Square Enix	234	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.5	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E
Line Rider 2: Unbound	6.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ	5.0	Destineer	235	T
Lock's Quest	7.0	THQ	234	E
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Conductor	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Lost in Blue 3	5.5	Konami	227	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	7.0	Atlus	236	T
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E
Madden NFL 09	N/A	Electronic Arts	232	E
Master of the Monster Lair	6.5	Atlus	235	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force 2	7.0	Capcom	230	E
Metal Slug 7	7.5	Ignition	236	T
Mister Slime	6.0	SouthPeak	230	E
MLB 2K8 Fantasy All-Stars	6.5	2K Sports	228	E
Monster Lab	8.0	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	7.5	Mastiff	236	T
The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor	N/A	Vivendi Games	231	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	5.0	Gamecock	236	E
Myst	5.0	Empire Interactive	227	E
Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir	6.5	Nintendo	234	E
• N+	7.0	Atari	228	E
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	N/A	Majesco	232	E10+
• Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	6.5	Tomy	234	E10+
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	6.0	Capcom	236	E
• New International Track and Field	8.0	Konami	232	E10+
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	8.5	Tecmo	227	T
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Ninjatown	8.0	SouthPeak	235	E
Personal Trainer: Cooking	N/A	Nintendo	237	E
Petz: Bunnyz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation	6.0	Koei	233	E
Populous	7.0	XSEED	234	T
• Prey the Stars	5.5	Koei	234	E10
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	7.0	Ubisoft	237	E
Princess on Ice	N/A	Aksys	235	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Puchi Puchi Virus	7.0	NIS America	228	E
Quantum of Solace	6.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Retro Game Challenge	8.0	XSEED	237	RP
Robocalypse	7.5	Tecmo	235	E10+
Rock Revolution	5.0	Konami	235	E10+
Rondo of Swords	6.5	Atlus	228	E10+
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	237	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E
Shaun the Sheep	4.0	D3Publisher	235	E
Shaun White Snowboarding	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E
• Skate It	5.5	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	8.0	Sega	234	E
Soul Bubbles	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E
Space Invaders Extreme	8.0	Square Enix	230	E
• Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	8.0	Disney	235	E10+
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Spore Creatures	8.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	6.0	LucasArts	236	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	6.0	LucasArts	233	T
Summon Night: Twin Age	7.5	Atlus	229	E10+
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	6.5	Aksys	229	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	N/A	Namco Bandai	230	E
• Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	6.0	Tecmo	235	E
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	7.0	Ignition	228	E10+
Theresia	N/A	Aksys	235	M
Time Hollow	7.0	Konami	234	T
• Tom Clancy's EndWar	N/A	Ubisoft	236	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	N/A	Eidos	236	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	4.0	Activision	237	E
Top Spin 3	6.0	2K Sports	229	E
Tornado	6.0	Ignition	234	E
Transformers Animated: The Game	7.0	Activision	235	E
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	8.5	Atlus	231	T
Unsolved Crimes	4.5	Empire	234	T
• Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	7.0	THQ	234	E
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
What's Cooking? Jamie Oliver	N/A	Atari	235	E
• The World Ends With You	9.0	Square Enix	228	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	4.0	THQ	236	T
Zenses: Oceans	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zenses: Rainforest	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E

THERESIA

Theresia is, by far, the creepiest DS game I've ever played. The atmosphere of this item/puzzle-oriented adventure title is wholly unsettling, and the story is full of suspense and mystery. The way that you can take damage without warning seems pretty cheap, but it does add to the tension. Play this one in the dark and bring a spare pair of undergarments. **—CHRIS H.**

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR (Wii)

While World at War isn't entirely revolutionary, its solid controls and polished, cinematic presentation make it stand out. **—JUSTIN C.**



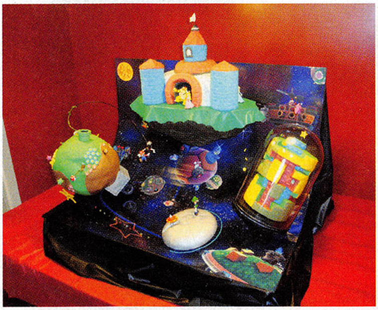
SKATE IT (Wii)

There's a learning curve when playing Skate It for the first time, but the game can be fun once you get used to the controls. (I recommend using the remote-and-Nunchuk control scheme, even though it's still not as precise as I'd like.) Unfortunately, the Balance Board option doesn't work very well. **—JUSTIN C.**

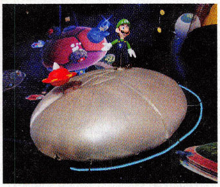
COMMUNITY

FANDOM

Galaxy Sweet Galaxy



All the world's a cake in this Super Mario Galaxy homage.



Baked goods based on video games have been drawing fan attention for years, but this Super Mario Galaxy cake takes the concept to a whole new stratosphere. More than a simple sheet cake, this motor-driven, animated creation depicts several locations and happenings from the game, including Bullet Bill chasing Mario around a round planet (complete with a spinning star and bobbing Piranha Plant), a stomping Bowser abducting Peach at her castle, and an ever-rotating capsule-shaped planet.

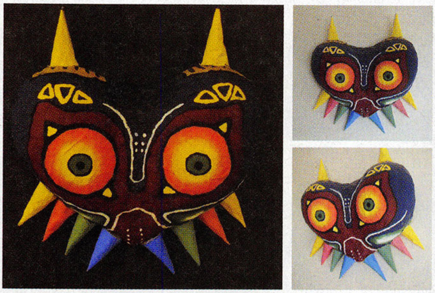
The work is not the creation of a master pastry chef, but rather of Will Turnbow, a 35-year-old engineer from Fort Worth, Texas. Will says he "hates cooking," but that hasn't stopped him and his wife, Liliana, from putting together 15 animated cakes over the last five years, primarily for his daughters' birthday parties and other occasions. A huge fan of Mario since Donkey Kong and the original Mario Bros. game, Turnbow recently turned his daughters on to Super Mario Galaxy, and with one daughter's fourth birthday approaching, he suggested a cake based on the game.

With enthusiastic approval, he set to work designing the dynamic dessert, sketching out ideas based on more than 100 screen grabs of the game. Realizing he couldn't represent every planet in the game, Turnbow had to pick and choose, eliminating prospective planets that were either too bland-looking or too oddly shaped, and eventually settling on what you see on the final cake. With about a week and a half to go before the party, Turnbow got to work on the base, building wooden supports for the printed background and castle/planets, as well as motors for the various moving parts.

It all came together in the hectic night before the bash, with standard store-bought cake mix used for the round planet, silver disc, and castle base, and Rice Krispies treats utilized for the pill-shaped planet and castle towers. Not only did Will and his wife work diligently on piecing the cake together, but Will's parents helped provide the rest of the manpower needed to complete the project in one night. "If it weren't for them, I don't think we'd have finished in time," says Turnbow. "They are just as weird as me—it was a really fun night of cake decorating."

Eight cake mixes, seven batches of Rice Krispies treats, and one night of sleep later, the cake was served to the delight of 20 children and more than a dozen adults. Yes, they ate it—while it may seem sacrilegious to cut into such a beautiful homage, the fondant-covered creation was intended for consumption. Will says the party guests were only able to take down the round planet, one castle tower, and half the pill planet—the rest was leftovers!

Turnbow admits he would have done things a bit differently in hindsight, despite the grandiosity of the finished cake, but he doesn't think it would be "too hard for anyone to do the cakes" he's made. Though he had previously made a cake based on Microsoft's Halo franchise, Turnbow says he'd be willing to make additional Nintendo-themed cakes—assuming his daughters ask for them. "Metroid or Kid Icarus, please," requests Turnbow, though he notes his daughters have been playing a lot of Banjo-Kazooie on Nintendo 64 recently, so a cake based on that title could be in the cards. Regardless of the inspiration, if we hear of any more Nintendo-related cakes coming out of the Turnbow household, we'll be sure to bring them to you! —**ANDREW H.**



FANDOM

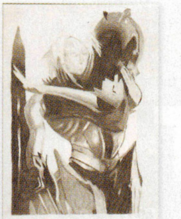
Majora's (Papier-Mâché) Mask

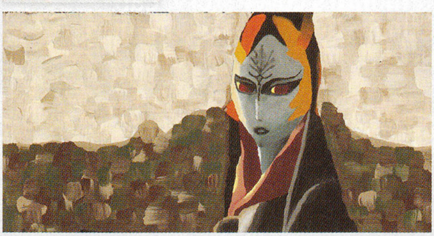
A young fan offers his artistic take on Nintendo classics.

It's been more than eight years since The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask first captivated gamers on the Nintendo 64, but it continues to inspire creativity within Nintendo fans. Brad Elders, a 17-year-old high-school student from southeastern Arizona, rendered the titular mask in papier-mâché for a Halloween costume, but the finished product missed the deadline and now hangs on his wall and "creeps [him] out." Elders says the game's "stressed and unique atmosphere" makes Majora's Mask one of his all-time favorites, and this artistic expression is the result of that play experience.

His rendition of Majora's Mask is not the only time Nintendo games have influenced his artistic creations—Elders has used his high-school art classes as an opportunity to re-create other iconic characters and scenes from his favorite games. An avid fan of acrylic painting, Elders sent along images of recent completed works like human-form Midna from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and a painting of Samus's visor being jumbled by Meta Ridley from Metroid Prime 3: Corruption. His artistic interests even extend to pencil drawings based on Okami and the Metroid series. While much of his work is derived from video games, Elders has created art based on other forms of media, such as the film *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and album covers from progressive metal band Dream Theater.

Elders has been gaming since his family got a Super NES when he was a young kid, and he counts classics like Super Mario World and Donkey Kong Country among his favorites. He's recently been enraptured by Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Animal Crossing: City Folk, so perhaps his art will reflect those Wii hits next. Are you up for a papier-mâché Tom Nook, Brad? —**ANDREW H.**





ABOVE *and* BEYOND

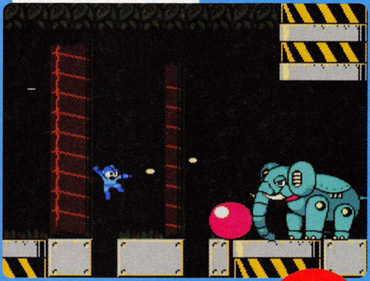
Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., Suite 510, Brisbane, CA 94005. We'll run the best stuff in this section.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

The end is here! Or at least it is in Volume 236's SimCity Creator screenshot. Check out some of the readers' armageddon-centric captions below (though none of the captions actually reference Michael Bay's 1998 film). This month, we're going old-school. Well, new old-school. Anyway, send an email to **screentest@nintendopower.com.**

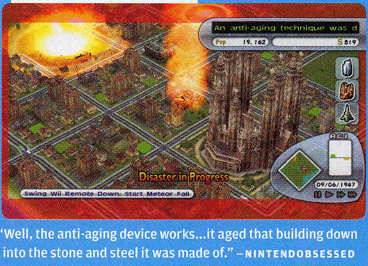
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Who knew that Mega Man was one of the Ringling brothers?

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 236'S SHOT


An anti-aging technique was d
Pop 19,162
$519
RCI
Disaster in Progress
Swing Wii Remote Down: Start Meteor Fall
09/06/1947

"Well, the anti-aging device works...it aged that building down into the stone and steel it was made of." —**NINTENDOBSESSED**

"Villainy was a lot cheaper back in 1947; $519 could buy you a meteor-attracting doomsday device." —**BICHER**

"Tired of waiting in line for the anti-aging technique, Lucas resorted to PK Storm." —**FREDDY C.**

"But I thought that throwing a meteor would make my city better.... I mean, fewer people, fewer to feed...." —**NIKITA D.**

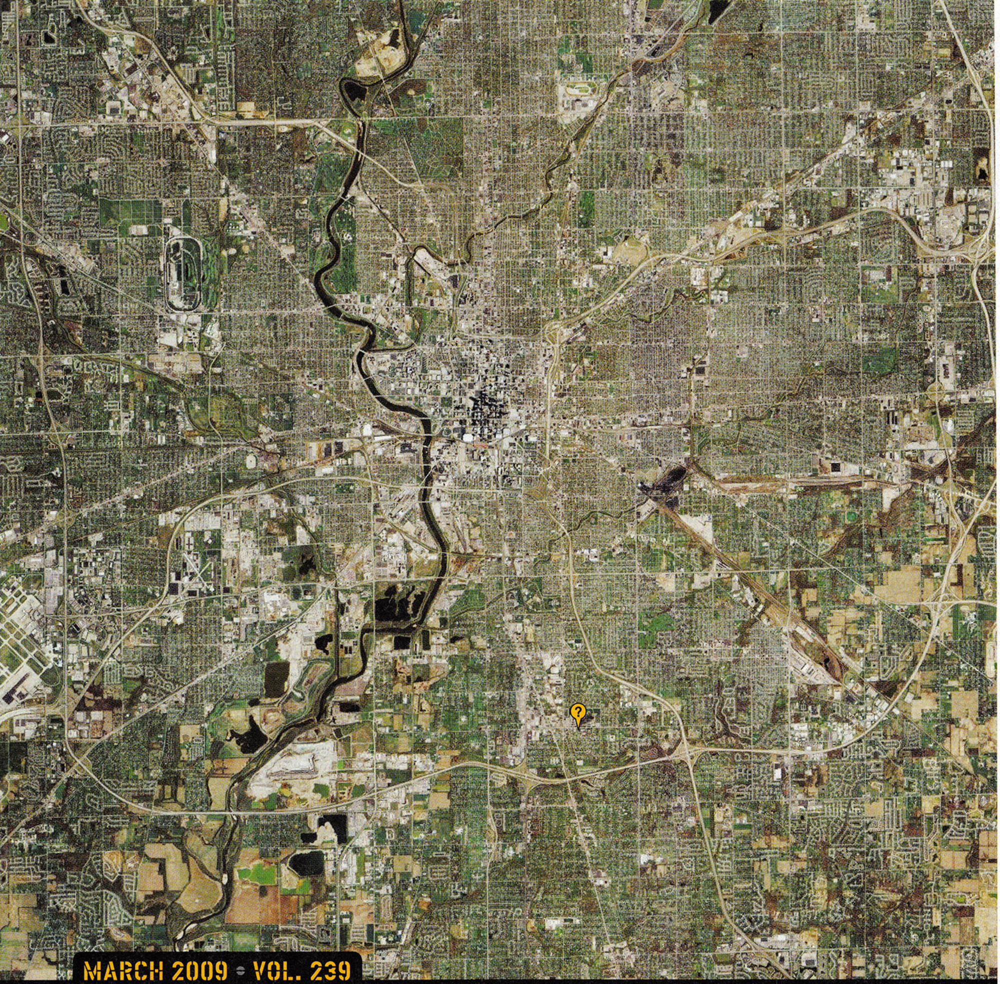


IMAGE COURTESY OF GOOGLE MAPS

MARCH 2009 • VOL. 239

NEXT MONTH

We've made an exciting discovery for next month's cover story. Can you guess what it is? We'll also have an exclusive look at The Conduit's multiplayer modes and reveal the winners of the 2008 NP Awards.

Nintendo Power (ISSN 1041-9551) is published 13 times a year (monthly, except semi-monthly in September) by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at South San Francisco, CA and additional mailing offices. Ride-Along: None. Standard Mail Enclosure: None. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: $24.95; Canada $29.95. Canadian orders must be prepaid in US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R128220688). Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement #40043631. Returns: 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. For customer service write to: Nintendo Power Customer Care, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270, or call: 1(866) 941-8368 in the US. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Nintendo Power, P.O. Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Entire contents copyright 2009, Future US, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. Produced and printed in the United States.

From Bowser to Zelda: Master all Brawl's fighters
The final set of exclusive guides in one easy place for better brawling

gr.

Head over to www.gamesradar.com for...

Top 7 failed franchises we know how to fix, bad guys you don't want to kill, worst celebrity voiceovers, forgotten sequels and many, many more. Plus all the gaming news, previews, reviews, features, cheats and videos you can handle.

games radar.

The official website of the internet

Elebits
The Adventures of Kai and Zero
Capture the magic Elebits in an adventure filled quest to get back home!
Available Now!
Master Challenges
Capture Elebits
Explore Worlds
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Cartoon Violence
Online Interactions Not Rated by The ESRB
KONAMI
www.konami.com
NINTENDO DS
www.konami.com/elebits

© 2008 Konami Digital Entertainment. KONAMI is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. The rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo

RETROMAGS

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at www.retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!